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# The Typical Persons of the Pentateuch: their Message to the Church in all Ages.

## Man in the Presence of God.

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# SERMONS

PREACHED DURING

## THE SEASON OF LENT, 1870-71,

IN

# OXFORD.

BY


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# SERMON I.

## Continuity of the Typical Teaching of the Old Testament.

ST. MATTHEW xxii. 20.

"Whose is this image and superscription?"

IT was an unwelcome question. The cavillers, who had come to our Lord to ask Him whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, had no mind to face the plain issue whether the tribute money was Cæsar's due: proved to be his due by the image which gave it currency. Here, as He ever did, our Lord turned men's attention to the essential truth of the matter in hand, silenced vain questions and casuistical doubts by the very simplicity with which He stated just what an honest questioner would need to consider—and no more. His hearers had come with store of objection and dilemma; but for these there was no place: they must needs answer a simple question simply, and by implication already condemn themselves.

In propounding the question in the text to-night in a very different connection, I do not wish to wrest, or even to forget, the proper meaning of our Master's words. I desire to remember—and pray you to remember—the principle contained in His rejoinder to the Jews' ensnaring speech. Meditating on the subject before us, let us try to look at it and speak of it with the direct simplicity and truthfulness that

gave such power to our Blessed Lord's reply. Is there in the Saints and Patriarchs of the earliest age a character traceable in successive generations and lives? Is there a likeness between them? a special temper and conduct belonging to them more than to others? Has the coin we are examining a stamp and legend of its own? If it has—"Whose image and superscription is this?"

Before I answer this question, let me freely admit that other histories too have their own connecting principles and lines of resemblance: other races and families have distinguishing marks, separating them from the rest of the world, and so giving to the antique story a voice of prophecy fulfilled—perhaps again and again—in later days. History, it has been said, repeats itself. We should expect it to do so; for is not human nature substantially the same in all ages; subject, indeed, to infinite varieties of influence, wayward and versatile, inconstant and infirm,—yet in this very inconstancy and waywardness, apt to reproduce itself? fruitful in old errors, and ready to act over again forgotten scenes? Those of you who read history attentively must have been startled, I am sure, with the strange parallels and correspondences which come from time to time in your way. A turn in the narrative brings you face to face with what had seemed altogether buried and past. Old chronicles come down, as it were, from their shelves, and speak in language of these later days. The monuments of bygone ages give up their dead; we can hardly believe our eyes as we look on these resuscitated forms. Nor is it altogether an unnatural consequence, that we sometimes question the truth of what is told us about old times because of this very resemblance to later experience.

The likeness is suspicious; it has a look of forgery about it: and not unfrequently the hasty critic condemns it as such. He finds a modern air in what was really neither ancient nor modern, but a truth of every age.

The account, however, of this resemblance between distant ages and persons is not to be found in the characteristics of human nature alone. Beyond the sphere of human action and motive, in a domain which passion cannot enter, nor change of mood disturb, there is a Power by whom all the ages are controlled,—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Man's folly and frailty bring him into conflict with the everlasting laws of this kingdom; and the same results of the conflict have appeared on the page of history from generation to generation since the world began. The waves of man's passionate, tumultuous life still beat against eternal barriers of right and duty: who can wonder that wreck after wreck still strews the wave-washed shore?

There are reasons, then, both in the frail nature of man, and in the unchangeable truth of the providence of God, why we should expect history to repeat itself. It must needs have its typical persons and events, its ideal characters and recurring forms of thought. You might have expected, perhaps, that knowledge of the past would save men from making old mistakes again. But it is not so: each generation, it seems, must buy its own experience by its own failures; composite characters do not throw off the elements of weakness which erewhile belonged to the same type, retaining only what is strong and pure: strength and weakness reappear together. Not in particular families only, but in nations—nay, in regions of history altogether un-

connected by inherited tradition or descent—the old is still the parent of the new.

Freely admitting all this, I ask again, is there not in the saints and patriarchs, of whom your preachers are to speak, a typical character altogether their own? We Christians have our attention called to them as to no other company of men. Each name that is placed before you, has been named by our Lord or His Apostles, and enshrined for ever in the New Testament page. It is our Lord Himself who has spoken of the days of Noah, as of a familiar time,—who has recognised in Moses a Divine lawgiver—has put such honour upon Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as to make them a kind of hosts to welcome others into the kingdom of God. It is He who gives testimony to the righteousness of Abel, and to the faith of Abraham. If we had never heard of the Pentateuch, we should have gained the knowledge of these saints from the discourse of Christ. He does not speak of other histories, nor teach us to acquaint ourselves with the great men who have been famous in other fields of renown. Something there is in these ancients, more than in other men, which makes them fit subjects of contemplation to Jesus Christ, and therefore to the disciples of Jesus Christ in every age. For in every age they have been the honoured companions of devout Christians. They are of no school or party: no special theology dares claim them for its own. The highest art has lovingly and humbly striven to represent them: the common people use their names in familiar talk. All communions have recognised their ancient dignity: divines of all persuasions entertain their memory as the remembrance of friends. Depending on no formal act of canonization, needing no special ecclesiastical homage,

they belong to the Church of all periods, and enter into the religious thought of every age. Something there must be, I say, in the great heroes of the sacred story, which makes them, in these last days, no less than in bygone centuries, fit objects for the reverent regard of the whole Christian world. In what does this fitness consist?

It is but a partial answer that we give, when we say that they won this regard from Christ by their faith. Eminent, indeed, they were by their faith: they could not else have received honour from Him at all. They had a perception of God's presence, and of His dealings both with themselves and with the world wherein they lived, to which others were strangers. Noah was building the ark while the whole race of men slumbered in careless unbelief. Abraham journeyed on towards an unknown home, while his kinsfolk stayed by their idols in the land of their birth. Moses preferred exile and affliction to a palace, although his people could scarcely be roused even to wish for escape from servitude and toil. No doubt there was a religiousness and godliness of character in them, unknown to the majority of men then, unknown to the majority of men ever since. You feel its presence even in such an one as Jacob, whose character was not without grievous stains, nor his life free from great faults. Yet he carries about with him a sense of the presence of God, refers his actions to God, dreams of Him in the hours of rest, sets up memorials of Him as he goes on his way in the world. In the less mingled character of Joseph what a marvellous reflection of Divine influences we behold! The confiding candour and loving obedience of his youth, his gentleness in suffering, his unsullied purity in time of dangerous temptation, his

discretion and modesty in great office, his affectionate remembrance of father and home, his persistent charity and tenderness of heart even in old age;—look at this character, and doubt, if you can, whose image and superscription it bears. These are God's gracious gifts: they could not be possessed by one who had not a special relation to the Giver of all good. If everything prospered in Joseph's hand, it was God's blessing, be sure of it, that gave such prosperity,—God's favour that preserved, untainted, a child's purity and gentleness in the despotic ruler of a mighty land.

Yet, after all, this is (as I said) only a partial answer to the question proposed. God set His seal to these Saints, not only—or perhaps chiefly—in making them saints by His grace, but in fashioning them after a singular type, and so ordering their offices and actions as to express great truths especially connected with Himself. This is so evident in the instances of Adam, Melchisedec, and Aaron, as scarcely to need mention. But it is true also in cases less evident than these. It pleased God so to frame and fashion their lives, and to give them such opportunities,—sometimes such trials,—as to make them significant, if not to their own times, or to themselves, yet to later times and to enlightened eyes, of the principal articles of Christian doctrine. They set forth to us the acts and offices of Christ: or they explain to us God's dealings with His Church: or they illustrate the life of God in the believer's soul. They are typical, not merely as in general history events or persons foreshadow like events and persons hereafter to be reproduced, but by Divine ordinance and peculiar adaptation to an appointed end. Men call us fanciful, when we thus speak; but why should it be thought incredible that God should deal providentially

with the work of His own hands? It is admitted that virtue and holiness are endowments from Him: these saints could not have lived and died as they did, but by His informing and overruling grace. If He gave them this primary and essential characteristic, why should He not also order their lives so as to express other features of His great design for man? His divine power conformed them to Himself in righteousness; did it need power more than divine to make their doings types and patterns in other respects of His own fore-ordained acts? This probability needs no postulate, but the postulate that God is the providential governor of the world. It will follow that He might have been expected to signalize the most solemn and important acts of His administration beforehand. Especially if His only-begotten Son was pleased to visit His lost world, —surely the one incomparably greatest event that could possibly come to pass in it,—He would prepare men in a thousand ways for the day of His coming. Heralds would go before the Almighty King. Type and prophecy, vision and dream, would multiply on His path: the hearts of the faithful would be stirred: a favourable opinion (as we say) would be created: men would be familiarized with words and deeds akin to those of the coming Prince: history would have its pregnant analogies, human life its intimations and foreshadowings of its Author's great design. The family, of which He was to be born, would be the guardian of these oracles, the chosen depository of these hints. Looking back along the line of its ancestry, we should expect to meet with tokens of His relation to it: the portraits of its worthies would, sometimes at least, bring His countenance before our eyes. If I do not speak now of rites and ceremonies expressly instituted by God,

and directly—I had almost said, professedly—illustrating the future Gospel, it is because these form a branch of the great subject before us, which it is not our purpose to submit to you now. It is of typical *persons* that you are to hear this Lent: our preachers will bring before you in detail what I have suggested as belonging to the general view. The conviction will grow upon you, that these are not names picked out at random from the annals of the elder world, but a series of men with whom God was marvellously dealing for our sakes. You will recognise a divine idea in the whole story of their race. Perhaps you may even come to perceive that you owe portions of your own Christian knowledge to the teaching they have given you. Your idea of Christ would be less complete—to say no more—if you had not these typical antecedents of Him, and you may enjoy the hope, as you still proceed in this study, that you may gain new fruits of sacred learning: that, while you contemplate the lives of the servants, you may know more and more of the life and character of their Lord.

This, indeed, is the reason why we commend this subject to you in the season of Lent. I will not weary you with arguments to prove that *some* enlargement of your ordinary study of sacred things is proper to this consecrated time. You feel, I am sure, if you have any desire to win a blessing from its due observance, that its call to you includes this duty,—the duty of reading more, or thinking more, about Him whom you seek. Some additional meditation, or reading, or hearing of sermons, has formed part of every scheme of religious exercises in Lent. With you, my brethren in Christ, it will not, I trust, be only part of a scheme of exercises, but a real help to that growth in grace, to which you

desire and pray to attain. The very discipline of rigorously claiming an additional portion of each day, however small, for the thought of God, will be of effectual service to you. You want deliverance from the world in which you live. You feel that it has more power over you than it ought to have: it is not merely a world around you—that must be so—but within you. You are too apt to think its thoughts, and adopt its principles, without so much as considering whether they are good and true. With some of you, perhaps, there is an overwhelming influence of this kind: the duties, or the pleasures of life, are so many and so incessant, that you have, or seem to have, no time ever to question yourselves on the grounds of your opinions or the motives of your conduct,—no space for retirement, or any place in which you can commune with your God. Lent gives you such a time,—bids you find such a place.

The outline of these Sermons may suggest to you one profitable subject, at least, on which to exercise your thoughts. Considered as mere history, it might transport you far from present excitements and every-day thoughts. The contemplation of that far-off Eastern world, with its grave fathers spending long generations in the seriousness of the old patriarchal life, might of itself lessen your absorbing admiration for the busy, restless Western society of modern days. The thought of the greatest of them all, "a mighty prince," as the children of Heth called him, yet "a stranger and sojourner," living simply in his tent a quiet pastoral life, rebukes our self-indulgent, luxurious existence, with its complicated engagements, and its thousand needless cares. But all this is the least part of the great subject before you. Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Christ. His thoughts and hopes were

fixed on a power and a glory yet to come. You are privileged to enter into those thoughts, but with a clearer knowledge, and with an abounding thankfulness, of which he had only the elements and anticipations within his reach. Communing in spirit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you are communing with those who longed for Christ, who are with Christ in glory now. You come back from their society as the disciples came down from the Mount, when they had heard Moses and Elias talking with their Lord. You have a glory shining above you, a reflection of heavenly society, a fragrance of Paradise. You have been with the Saints: you have drawn, through their converse, nearer to Christ. Let this be the aim of all your contemplation —to approach more closely to Him. Brethren, this is the great purpose of Lent; the great purpose of every season, of every devotional exercise, every holy meditation, to make you know and love your Divine Master more. What reason you will have to thank God when the bright Easter morning dawns upon you, if by these, or any other, meditations, humbly entertained, faithfully pursued, you have been led to gain a clearer insight into the perfection of His holiness, the depth of His redeeming love. Life, when we come to the end of it, will be reckoned by these recurring years, and seasons, and times of grace. Let not one of these pass—oh, let not this one pass,—without its own fresh gain of heavenly thoughts received and cherished, its own fresh earnest of the hope to be with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.

# SERMON II.

## Adam.

**ROMANS v. 14.**

**"Who is the figure of Him that was to come."**

ὅς ἐστι τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος.

"Qui est forma futuri."

I ASSUME that there can be no doubt as to the meaning of the words which we render, "Him that was to come;" and that the ambiguity to which the Latin version, *Qui est forma futuri*[a], might have possibly lent itself, can have no place in the original. In Adam, the Apostle's phrase leads us to see, not the likeness of *what was to be*, but the Figure of *Him that was to come*. Doubtless, we may read in Adam the foreshadowing of what was to happen in the world, of the future of his race; but here, the Apostle speaks of the First Man as the Type of a Person, the First Type of Jesus Christ the Lord.

We are accustomed to this way of speaking, and often it hardly arrests our thought. And yet it might; for between Type and Antitype, in this case, the relation appears at first sight that of the extremest opposition of condition and character, and resulting work and consequences. "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second, is the Lord from Heaven." What oppo-

[a] Vid. Aug. Epist. clvii. 20; De Pecc. Mer., i. 13, iii. 9.

sition can be greater? Yet Adam is the Type of Christ. He, in whom we see the whole history of our sin and the true image of our falling short, is the figure of Him in whom is summed up all our hope of righteousness and the whole promise of our completeness. He who stands at the head of the history of this world, —so strange, so dark, so short,—is the figure of the "Father of the everlasting Age to come." He of whom, in the utter dimness of the beginning of time, we in vain attempt to form a conception, stands as the type of that Brother and Friend whose words and ways and mind are ever open to us, and whom we can know and love as we can none other, who has been among us and has gone from us. He who had a great trust and betrayed it so lightly is the type of Him who came to do His Father's will, and was obedient, even unto death. By what common likeness can we join together him in whom we behold the Fall, with Him in whom we receive the great and eternal Restoration? How can the great failure be the type of the great victory? the great transgression, of the great forgiveness; the great disaster, of the great recovery; fatal defeat and fault, of fulfilment and perfection? Every figure must in some respects be a contrast; and conversely, every contrast implies a parallel and correspondence; but here, the contrast seems to extinguish the likeness. How is darkness to be the figure of light? sin, of righteousness? death, of life? How should the beginning of the downward road of evil reflect the beginning of the new creation of righteousness? how should the Creature, in his first misery and weakness, suggest and represent the Creator, Holy and Strong—"the Lord from Heaven," dwelling among us in His awful Power and Love, to reverse our doom?

But high and low lie very near to one another, in that order in which the First Man and the Second are made by St. Paul to be answering counterparts. It is in a world where things are less real, where our thoughts are swayed by opinion and half knowledge and custom, that we shrink from putting them together, except as opposites. But the wisdom of God, which sees all things from end to end in the infinite vastness of the dispensation of grace, has no such restraint. In the first man, in the depth of his fall, it traces the lineaments of that Holy One who was in the fulness of time to bear his flesh and blood. He who made man was not ashamed of him. He who made man did not disdain to share the necessities of his humiliation, accepted the community of his loss and shame. He bore man's likeness; He grudged not that man should bear His own; that man, in the very moment of his overthrow, should be the prophecy of his Deliverer. He was not ashamed that we should see, in him in whom the world was lost, reflections of His own peculiar glory, the image and the promise of what He was Himself to make perfect. In the very beginning of human history and destiny, we find the figure of its fulfilment, which yet was to be so different.

We see in the great type of the Apostle two things. He to whom, step by step, our blood goes back, he in whom were the germs of all that we are, is set before us as the eternal memorial, at once of what man was meant for, and of what man has become. In him are seen together, the intention and the swerving, the purpose and the disappointment. He stands not alone in this melancholy significance. The Bible has many such types of good made frustrate, and the actual world is full of them. But in Adam it is the fortunes of man-

kind that we see summed up. He stands for us all; for all living souls, who from generation to generation receive and hand on the breath of human life. In him is the image of all his seed. His is no mere personal calling, no mere personal fall, like those of Saul and Judas. Meant for what he was, even man's perfection, yet in his mortality and pain, though brought upon him by himself, he makes his mute but undoubting appeal for restoration; he witnesses that all has not been in vain, that he was not made for nought. Where the glimpse that is given us is of the destinies of mankind, there, where the purpose and the failure come together, they seem to demand the remedy, and to announce it. So those, whose thoughts are moulded by the Spirit of the God of Hope, instinctively gather: so, the Bible, from first to last the comforter and upholder of human hope, bids them believe that their thoughts are true. He in whom we fell is the Figure of Him that was to come, because he faintly shadows forth the unimaginable perfection reserved for human nature in its true Head; and because, in the depths of his own ruin and failure, he cries out and stretches forth his hands for the fulfilment of what he has missed; and by those cries and yearnings to the Father who made him, is the warrant and promise of it. The type of our lost estate, to all experience irrecoverable, the type of our common disaster which once seemed as if it might have alleviations, but no reversal, is transfigured, while we gaze, into an image, faint yet surrounded with titles of awful honour, of One in whom the obstinate longings of man were to be more than made good; one by whom the "creature," long "subject to vanity, should be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." For the First

man stands at the head of the genealogy of the Second, as "Adam, which was the Son of God." The First man has that awful thing said of him which is said of the Second, in however more ineffable a meaning,—"In the image of God, made He man;"—the Son, "Who is the Image of the invisible God," "the express image of His person."

In Adam we have announced to us the archetype of man; what was the design of his being, what was the end and original law of his nature:—"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" "So God created man in His own image: in the image of God created He him." In Adam, we are told at the very opening of the Bible of the unity and brotherhood of mankind, that last discovery, long fought against and hardly recognised, of the widening thought of ages, of the conspiring feelings and reason of civilized man. In Adam, we have that position of man as the crown of all that we know, which is so absolutely unique and overwhelmingly mysterious—as the bondsman and victim of nature, yet its lord; in all its infinite spaces, the one thing free[b]; free to choose, free to obey, free to

[b] "The first appearance of man in nature was the appearance of a new being in nature. . . . The sun had risen, and the sun descended, the stars looked down upon the earth, the mountains climbed to heaven, the cliffs stood upon the shore, the same as now, countless ages before a single being existed who saw it. The counterpart of this whole scene was wanting,—the understanding mind: that mirror in which the whole was to be reflected; and when this arose, it was a new birth for creation itself, that it became *known*—an image in the mind of a conscious being. But even consciousness and knowledge were a less strange and miraculous introduction into the world than *conscience*. . . . Mysterious in his entrance into this scene, man is *now* an insulation in it. . . . What can be more incomprehensible, more heterogeneous, a more ghostly resident in nature, than the sense of right and wrong? What is it? whence is it? The obligation of man to sacrifice himself for right is a truth which springs out of an abyss, the mere attempt to look down into which confuses the reason. Man is alone, then, in nature; he alone of all the creatures communes with

rise; endowed, he alone of things here, with the wonderful power of self-conquest, self-correction, self-improvement; with capacities infinite of drawing nearer and nearer for ever to the Father, in whose Image he was made; the one thing able to know God, and to know what to God is good,—the one among creatures here whose perfection lay in the perfection of his *will*, in owning the sway of those strange, awful words, *ought*, and *ought not*.

And that was the prerogative and calling which was cast away. That was the purpose which was made void. That was the place in the order of God's creation, which from that time to this the race has not fulfilled. In this image of what man was made for begins the terrible record of what man has been; the unfolding of that terrible and almost infinite variety of failure and sin which crowds the pages of human history, and is its first and deepest impression. "In Adam all die:" nothing remains unspoilt; no promise reaches its true fulfilment, no good abides without decay and degeneracy: all wears out,—evil, happily, too, or the world would perish,—but also good. "In Adam all die:" we see it in man's greatest types as in his lowest; we see it in his refinement and in his degradation; we see it in his polities and in his Churches, as well as in those monstrous aggregations of unorganized men, without law, without country, without home, which crowd the outskirts of our great cities. Even in all those great doings of his, so elevating, so hopeful, of which the world is full, yet there lurks the taint of the heart not whole and the will infirm: and on them all

a Being out of nature; and he divides himself from all other physical life by prophesying, in the face of universal visible decay, his own immortality."—*Mozley, Bampton Lectures*, iii. pp. 88, 89.

waits death, breaking off the great labour of good, beating down the great triumphs over evil and folly. And what are these great labourers, great conquerors, whose work, too, has to begin afresh when they go,—what are these few among the so many, who "as soon as they are born, begin to draw to their end, and have no sign of virtue to shew?" Take the men and women, as we meet them in the streets; take the huge multitudes of the average; leave out the extremes on both sides,—extremes are rare in all orders of things, though they are less rare on the low side than on the high;—and what a spectacle rises before our mind, of falling short of standards, of things marred, of misuse, of emptiness, of decay. Think only, in all generations of time, in all countries of mankind, of the *waste of life;* of what to us, at least, can only seem the waste of life; the waste of life wantonly cut short, the waste of life, *itself wasted* in the having; the wastes of savage idleness; the wastes of barbarian wars and destructions:—life wasted in the artificial vices and wants of the highest social state; the waste of life, in *men*, for war, and, it must be said, for much that we call industry; the waste of life, in *women*, who live for man's sin, and by it. These, we know, are things on a great scale; they are things accepted, as what cannot be helped, as what in the nature of things must be. Do they not reveal to us a world in which, *who can tell how much*, life is wasted; wasted by men for themselves, wasted by what others do with them. "One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another;" and the tale they repeat is the same dreary story, of to-day fruitless as yesterday, of to-morrow sure to be thrown away as to-day; of irremediable, continuing *waste*. In such things as these we see, in its true measure, what is meant by the Fall.

Is not so manifest a purpose, and so manifest a falling short, the very ground and prophecy of hope? I do not suppose that we can always argue from tendency to effect; that every unfulfilled promise, and capacity, and aspiration, implies at last its fulfilment. But there are failures which are final, and there are failures which, in the very moment of their ill-success,—by what they *might* do, by what they *do*,—carry with them the promise of being at last repaired. The fall of Sodom was not like the fall of Israel, or the going astray of Greece and Rome. And here, in Adam and the race he stands for,—amid ruin, amid incredible debasement, amid the very mysteries of iniquity and apostasy around him, amid horrors not to be exaggerated, not to be told, of his history,—still are to be discerned the outlines of the image of God. Can that image stay with men, and not be to them the pledge of remedy? Can that image strike its print so deep,—can the dream of nature, contradicted everywhere, yet be always and obstinately of goodness, of what is noblest, and purest, and most divine,—and not lift mankind to the looking-for of deliverance, of that day when the old shall pass, and all things be made new? Can man feel, as he must feel, that sin is not his fate, that evil is not his natural law,—and not find in the power within him, of correcting what is amiss, of repentance, of improvement, the irresistible argument of hope? Surely, from Adam's Creation and Adam's Fall, from such a purpose and such an overthrow, did not the cry go up, prophetic of the grace that listened to it, for retrieval, for a new beginning? "In Adam all die,"—Adam, who was "made in the image and likeness of God." Is it not reason, indeed, that from that time till now, "the whole creation," in him made subject to vanity, "groaneth and travaileth

in pain together," crying out to be redeemed; not accepting as its fate "the bondage of corruption;" earnestly expecting the accomplishment of a destiny too great to fail at last? Is not this the expostulation and plea of our nature,—in its deep humiliation, in its unconquerable consciousness of what it was meant for and in *whose* hand it lives,—

> "O remember what my substance is;
> The work of Thy hands;
> The likeness of thy countenance.
> Despise not Thou the work of Thine own hands:
> Hast Thou made for nought Thine own image and likeness?
> For nought, if Thou destroy it[c]."

Human nature,—in what it is, and in what it is not; in what it would be and cannot be; in its aims and its incompleteness; in its stateliness and its deformity; in its charm and its repulsiveness; in its power and its failure,—sends up the cry for restoration. Man, but a link in the chain of nature, may stretch forth hands in vain to laws which cannot hear and cannot change. But can man, *the Spirit*, cry to the God who made him, the Father of Spirits, the Living, the All-compassionate, the True, without the prayer for help and redemption being itself the pledge of its fulfilment?

And thus, in his double character, of greatness and of misery; of the greatness of his end and the misery of his state; in his longings and their disappointment, in his wish for good and inability to resist the present, in the eternal conflict of conscience and passion, in the strange humiliation of a real *will*, ever defeated and defeating itself; in all the astonishing and deep contradictions of his condition, his desires, his history, he

[c] Bishop Andrewes.

foreshadows and foretells the deliverance which corresponds at once to the awful height of what he was meant for, and the depth, beyond our measuring, to which he had sunk. For his Deliverer was one like himself; yet with all the difference that there is between the Creature and the Creator. He who "took hold" of him was He who made him,—after whose Image he was made, whose Likeness he was meant to attain to: greater none could be, to stamp and make certain the greatness of his nature. But who can tell the depth of the humiliation of the Second Adam? "The Lord from heaven," the "quickening Spirit" by whom the dead are made alive, the "Word made flesh;" what was He but the likeness of His creature, in the wretchedness in which he had gone forth from Paradise; in the "form of a servant," in "the likeness of sinful flesh;" seeking the lost in the company of the lowest of the lost; the friend of "publicans and sinners," accepting the reproach of their companionship; tempted and scorned, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; bearing in the eyes of the world all the marks of ignominious and unsuccessful sin; judged, in the name of the Highest, as a deceiver and a blasphemer; made sin for us, made a curse for us; forsaken of God, a worm and no man, the very scorn of men, and outcast of the people. What has man done of worst evil, of which the apparent shadow did not rest on his Deliverer? What unrest, what pain, what privation, troubles his lot, which his Deliverer did not share? what is there in the sinner's doom at the Fall —shame, sorrow, death—which the Sinless does not accept, in order, in accepting it, to reverse it? Face to face with the amazing contrarieties of the Fall are the amazing contrarieties of the Incarnation. Face to

face with the greatness and the misery of the First man, are the greatness and the misery of the Second.

And so, at the point where the Fall leaves man, Redemption meets him: and the meeting-point is at the lowest depths. The Fall left him a being of mysterious and surmised greatness, but of most real and visible distance from all that he seemed made for; struggling with corruption and sin, or sinking under them; struggling with disaster, struggling with pain, struggling vainly with death; ever haunted by dreams of perfection, by dreams of bliss, and by the waking certainty of wretchedness and vanity. Whatever else may be true about him, what is palpable is, *his humiliation.* And then, in the very point of deepest ignominy and disorder, starting from all its disadvantages, traversing its paths, surrounded by all its badges, reflecting its dreary colours, not refusing the semblances of its more real evil; amid that mortal confusion and degradation of conscience, in which good is taken for evil, and evil for good, and in which the Holiest was thought the vilest of sinners,—the Restorer of man begins His new and strange work, His new creation. In Adam we see what Christ was to meet with, and to begin with; where Adam had descended to, Christ descended to meet him: in sorrow, in infirmity, in defeat, in the humiliations of mortality, in all but the evil of our treacherous *will*, man's partner: his partner in such anguish as is described in the Psalms; in daily company with his distresses and all that train of unknown and nameless suffering which surrounds the Son of Man in the Gospels. The work of heaven, it begins on earth, amid the too well known conditions of our state, the too well known and familiar realities of what we are and what we have to go through. From that which seems to be

but the continuation of the doom of the Fall, from that which seems to be its aggravation in the person of the Innocent, from the darkness and dreary gloom with which Adam's history closes, issues forth the power which is to repair the wreck, the light which is to make it no longer hopeless, the Life which is to quicken the dead. The figure is fulfilled; its conflicting aspects are reconciled in the transcendent Antitype. "In Adam all die: in Christ shall all be made alive;" but not before the death of the First man is repeated in the Second; not before "God had made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him;" not before the "Captain of man's salvation should by the grace of God taste death for every man;" "should be made perfect through sufferings."

Adam is "the Figure of Him that was to come," the figure of our perfection, and of our ruin and mortality; the figure of God's intention, of what man has spoiled and God repaired. We may measure the reality of the deliverance by the reality, which we know, of the wreck; we may measure the vastness of what was wrecked by the greatness of the remedy[d]. And so the world is changed, and what might but be guessed at before is made certain now. We are of a race that had lost its way; and now we know it. We are of a race whose prospects and destiny it is vain to circumscribe by what we see; it belongs to a world to which this world cannot reach, and where we are linked with God. So even the First man dared to imagine before the Second came; but he knew not, and all the practical energy of his nature was directed *here*. He went forth and did great things. As it is said in those

[d] Pascal, Pensées, ii. 85, 145 (ed. Faugère).

great Choruses which are the Psalms of Heathenism,—he subdued the earth, he founded states, he sought out arts, he mastered powers living and powers elemental, he found the secret of beauty, and the spell of words, and the power of numbers, and the fine threads that waken and order thought; he made the world his workshop, his arsenal, his palace; generation after generation he learned to know more of its inexhaustible magnificence, to use more of its inexhaustible gifts; his eye was more opened, his sense more delicate, his hand more crafty; he created, he measured, he gathered together, he enjoyed. He is before us now, in his greatness, his hopes, his pride, with even nobler aims and vaster tasks, alleviating misery, curing injustice, bridling or extinguishing disease. But still he is the First Man: of the riddle of his nature he has not the key, and despairs of reaching it: he passes in his greatness, and never continueth in one stay: sorrow and decay baffle him, sin entangles him, and at the end is death. "Of the earth, earthy;" of the earth, bounded by its barriers, invisible, impassable. And now, side by side with him, is the Second Man, from the Manger, the Cross, the Grave,—dead, yet alive, and alive for ever: attended by His train of sanctities, by unthought-of revelations of heart, by the "things of the Spirit," by hopes and peace which for this world were an idle dream, by the new Beatitudes. He comes in the greatness of his strength, he comes in weakness: but strength and weakness to Him are both alike; for love, which is of God, in strong and weak, is the life of the new creation, its "one thing needful," the essential mark of its presence. So He comes, on the bed of sickness, in the lifelong burden, in the broken heart; with the children in spirit, the poor, the feeble, the helpless, the unknown;

with the sorrows of penitence, the hunger after righteousness, the longings to be true, the longings to be pure, the joy of forgiveness, the hope that is for the other side of the grave. Strange attendants for the company of the Deliverer; but they bring with them the victory which nothing else has gained. "The First Man is of the earth, earthy; the Second Man is the Lord from heaven." O Soul of man,—called to this wonderful existence, so gifted, yet so rigidly bounded: made for such great things, yet turned aside by such poor ones: so promising, yet so transient: the breath of a day between the two eternities, yet rich with power, and thought, and beauty, rich in capacities of grace and goodness, ever unfolding, ever growing; conscious of such needs and such evils, longing for such firm reality and truth, responding to such calls, and then going hence, as if never having been:—where is to be thy part? what wilt thou do with what is given thee, with that great and fearful thing which we call life? Wilt thou rest in the portion of the First Adam:—great, lovely, as it often is, merely to live, to see, to be glad in the sky above and God's blessing on the earth, in our home, in our work? It is enough, if we had no more; it is enough to be thankful for, if our view closed here. "But the First Man is of the earth, earthy: and there is the Second Man, the Lord from heaven." And none but He dares claim the two great victories: the victory over sin, the victory over death. With Him only is it said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." With Him only it is said, "that this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Only He speaks to us here, of "mortality swallowed up of life."

With Him only it is said, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." He only

> "Holds for us the keys of either home,
> Earth and the world to come[e]."

O Soul of man, inheritor of the First Adam, newborn to the Second, which wilt thou choose?

[e] Lyra Apostolica, No. 71.

# SERMON III.

## Abel.

HEBREWS xi. 4.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh."

ACCORDING to the appointed course of these Lenten Sermons, it falls to my lot this evening to speak to you of the first martyr recorded in the world's history, of him to whom Divine wisdom has applied the noble epithet of "RIGHTEOUS ABEL[a]." I have to dwell upon his history both in its general aspect and in its typical relation to the Gospel, and to shew you how the message which he thus delivered is an abiding message of comfort and instruction to the Church of God, even to the end of the world.

We find the circumstances of Abel's history, so far as they are handed down to us, in the fourth chapter of the Book of Genesis. We there read that after the expulsion from Paradise, Eve bare to Adam a son, whom she at once named Cain, or "acquisition," saying, perhaps with a reference to the first promise, "I have gotten," or acquired, "a man from the Lord." We are then told that "she again bare his brother, Abel." The names of remarkable persons in Holy

[a] St. Matt. xxiii. 35.

Scripture are frequently given to them, as by a Divine instinct, at the time of their coming into the world, to mark something peculiar, either in the circumstances of their birth, or in their future destinies. But whether or not Abel received this appellation at his birth, his name, which signifies "vanity," or "nothingness," is strikingly indicative of the frailty and shortness of his life, and of his sudden and violent end.

Well; the two brothers grew up, and in due time entered, each of them, upon their allotted callings in life. Of Cain we read that he "tilled the ground." It was a part of the Divine sentence inflicted upon Adam that the ground was cursed for his sake, and that thenceforth it would yield nothing of what was precious and useful, but in return for hard and toilsome labour. It was not, indeed, that there was no labour in Paradise, for we are told that the Lord God put Adam into the garden of Eden "to dress it and to keep it." A Divine hand first planted and adorned the garden, and thenceforth it was Adam's business, by his own industry, to maintain its primitive beauty. Thus industry was demanded of man, as of all God's creatures, even in his state of innocency. And hence the curse inflicted upon man was the curse, not of labour, but of painful and oppressive labour. "In the sweat of his face he was to eat bread;" and so, as has been well observed, "we were designed for labour in our first happy state; and upon our lapse thence were further doomed to it, as the sole remedy of our needs, and of the inconveniences to which we became exposed [b]."

Thus Cain became a husbandman. But Abel followed another pursuit, which, though not exempting from activity and vigilance, afforded more opportunity

[b] Barrow, vol. iii. p. 206.

for thought and contemplation [c]. While Cain was "subduing the earth," Abel was asserting the dominion which God had given to man over the beasts of the field, and he became a "keeper of sheep." We need not enter into the question whether the flesh of animals was ever used for food before the Flood. It is sufficient for our purpose to remember that the wool and the milk of the flock would be required for purposes of clothing and of food, to say nothing of those higher typical uses to which I shall have presently to call your attention.

We next read that "in process of time," or rather "at the end or fulfilment of days," as the words might be rendered, "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord; and Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof." It is possible that this religious service may have taken place upon the occasion of some appointed festival or solemn anniversary [d], and that thus the time as well as the place of offering may have been of Divine appointment. But, however this may be, the two brothers bring, each of them, their offerings, the gifts in either case being characteristic of their different employments. The husbandman, Cain, brings of "the fruit of the ground;" the shepherd, Abel, brings of the "firstlings of his flock." Perhaps the words of the narrative may imply that Abel took more pains than Cain in the selection of

[c] "In the first event or occurrence after the fall of man, we see, as the Scriptures have infinite mysteries, not violating at all the truth of the story or letter, an image of the two estates, the contemplative state and the active state, figured in the two persons of Abel and Cain, and in the two simplest and most primitive trades of life, that of the shepherd, who, by reason of his leisure, rest in a place, and living in view of heaven, is a lively image of a contemplative life; and that of the husbandman; where we see again the favour and election of God went to the shepherd, and not to the tiller of the ground."—*Bacon, Advancement of Learning*, bk. i.

[d] Perhaps on the seventh day, or Sabbath.

his gifts. But even if the words convey this meaning, we can hardly find here a sufficient reason why the oblation of one brother should have found favour rather than that of the other[e]. Nevertheless, we are told immediately that "the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect." In the one case, both the person and his offering were acceptable to Jehovah; in the other case, both were alike distasteful to Him. And then we read that "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." Whatever defects there may have been, whether in his disposition or in the nature of his offering, (and it would seem from the narrative that there was something faulty in both,) it is at least plain that he valued the favour of God; for as soon as he perceived that his offering was rejected, he was overcome with anger and vexation. But notwithstanding his exhibition of sullen displeasure, his Maker condescended to reason with him: "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." If I may venture to paraphrase this

[e] The Talmud supposes that Cain offered not his *best* produce. This view is held by several of the Fathers, as St. Ambrose and St. Chrysostom. Cornelius à Lapide says, "Obtulit Cain de fructibus terræ, secundos scilicet et viliores fructus. Primos igitur et meliores fructus sibi reservabat Cain; opponitur enim Abelo, qui obtulit Deo primogenita, et de adipibus, id est optima et pinguissima gregis sui."

To the same purpose, Milton:—

> "thither anon
> A sweaty reaper from his tillage brought
> Firstfruits, the green ear, and the yellow sheaf
> *Unculled, as came to hand;* a shepherd next
> More meek, came with the firstlings of his flock
> *Choicest and best.*"
>
> *Paradise Lost*, bk. xi. l. 433.

remonstrance, it may probably be thus understood :— "Thou hast displeased Me, both by thy offering and by the spirit with which thou hast made it. But if thou wilt henceforth do good, and follow My revealed will, thou mayest even yet find acceptance, like Abel ; but if not, remember that sin lieth at the door ; it is close at hand, lying in wait for thee, crouching like a wild beast of prey, ready to spring upon thee. Nevertheless, if thou wilt even now follow My commands, though sin is desirous to have thee, thou mayest even yet rule over it[f]." Thus this remonstrance was an admonition to Cain to submit himself to God's will, and to banish from his mind those turbulent passions of envy and discontent which were then agitating him. He was in great danger, but he might yet escape. It was not too late. It was still in his power to obtain a triumph. If he could not altogether destroy the enemy sin, he might at least hold it in check, and arrest its progress.

Perhaps for a time this merciful expostulation had its effect. The narrative, here as elsewhere, is somewhat obscure, though it seems to imply that there may have been a temporary reconciliation[g]. But within a while sin revived ; the old feeling of envy and hatred

[f] This interpretation is favoured by St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and others of the Fathers ; also by Cornelius à Lapide, Kalisch, Wordsworth, &c. Lightfoot and others consider "sin" in this passage to mean "a sin-offering," but it is difficult to reconcile this meaning with the context.

[g] Kalisch, following Gesenius, says that verse 8 might be rendered "And Cain said *it* to Abel his brother," that is, he communicated to him the words of God, which confidence might be regarded as shewing a disposition towards reconciliation. There is, however, some good authority for the Septuagint addition, "And Cain said unto Abel his brother, 'Let us go into the field.'" See Canon Selwyn's article on the Septuagint in Smith's "Bible Dictionary."

gained ascendancy, and in a moment of overpowering passion, perhaps when Abel was reasoning with him of the promises of redemption and of judgment to come, "Cain rose up against him and slew him."

Such is the narrative as we read it in Genesis. There is no lack of testimony in the New Testament to its actual historical reality; while for its typical meaning we can hardly find a more helpful passage than that which I have chosen for my text, it being carefully remembered that one great design of this Epistle to the Hebrews is to shew the relation of the ancient sacrifices to Christ[h].

Now in this text the Apostle tells us that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." The expression, "a more excellent sacrifice," is very remarkable. An early translation quaintly but accurately renders it, "a much more sacrifice[i]." And the meaning is clearly this, that by faith Abel was enabled to present that which was much more of the nature of a sacrifice than that offered by Cain, and that by this he obtained witness that he was righteous; righteous, that is, in the sense of being justified by his faith, God manifesting by some visible sensible token, probably that of fire consuming the sacrifice, that He accepted the offering[k]. It is difficult to see

[h] "The doctrine of this Epistle plainly is, that the legal sacrifices were allusions to the great and final Atonement to be made by the Blood of Christ, and not that this was an allusion to those."—*Butler's Analogy*, part ii. c. v.

[i] That of Wycliffe.

[k] "Quæres, pro signo declaravit Deus sibi placere oblationes Abelis, non autem Cain? Respondeo; communiter tradunt Patres, Deum id igne de cœlo misso in sacrificium Abelis, non autem Cain, declarasse; ignem enim hunc combussisse et consumpsisse sacrificium Abelis, Caini vero sacrificium intactum reliquisse." "Id ipsum asserunt et tradunt S. Hier., Procopius, Cyrillus hîc, Chrysost., &c., unde et Theodotion vertit"—καὶ ἐνεπύρισεν

in what the faith of Abel could have consisted, if not in the nature of his oblation. The question, therefore, that I have to ask myself is this, What grounds had Abel for believing that this would be "a more excellent sacrifice?"

Now we know that expiatory sacrifices have been prevalent throughout the world from very early times. How, then, do we account for this? Did the institution of sacrifice take its origin from the natural reason of man, or can it be traced to some distinct primæval revelation? It may safely be assumed that a common custom, diffused amongst races of the greatest diversity, must have sprung either from human reason or from some special and definite command of the Creator. Now we can hardly conceive that reason could have originated the idea of animal sacrifices. It might, indeed, conceive the propriety of presentations to God as thank-offerings, of the fruits and flowers of earth; but it could hardly suggest, without Divine guidance, that God would be pleased with the blood of animals and the fat of slain beasts, at least for their own sake. I admit that the institution once existing, the human conscience would acquiesce in its fitness, because there is that in fallen man which tells him that he is impure. The sense of sin prompts him to hide himself from the presence of the Lord. It tells him that there is something wrong between him and his Maker, and that this wrong needs to be redressed. But the question is, whether the unassisted reason of man could have devised such a method of reconciliation as this. To this there is apparently but one answer. The conclusion seems forced upon us, that a custom so universal, and

αὐτὰ ὁ Θεός—"inflammavit Dominus super Abel et sacrificium ejus, super Cain non."—*Cornelius à Lapide, in loc.*

yet at the same time so opposed to the primary conceptions or instincts of men, must have been derived from some supernatural revelation. And it is nothing to the point to contend that these sacrifices soon degenerated to corrupt and superstitious uses. All superstition is built up upon what is true. Superstition is something excessive, which the ill-regulated or uninstructed mind adds to revealed religion. Superstition is an abuse; but every abuse pre-supposes a true and proper use.

Let us see, then, whether there are sufficient reasons for concluding that expiatory sacrifices would be ordained by God. Now we know that immediately upon the fall of man the promise was made of his recovery through Christ. In the predicted "Seed of the woman" there lay the foundation of his hopes, and in the dim twilight of that first Gospel announcement he saw the pathway of his deliverance. From that moment the coming Saviour, who in some mysterious manner was to destroy the power of sin and Satan, became the great object of his faith. But how was this faith to be kept alive in the world? how but by some outward sign, which should have a typical resemblance to the thing signified. The Being who was to bruise Satan must Himself be bruised; and thus the first promise indicated that in order to the expiation of sin there must be the shedding of blood. If, then, we believe that Christ Jesus was "fore-ordained," that He was indeed "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world[1]," what more appropriate type of that deliverance could be appointed than that of sacrifice? Christ was to appear at the end of the world to put away sin by the one finished Sacrifice upon the Cross. But mankind

[1] Rev. xiii. 8.

must be gradually educated to receive this truth, and in this education the sacrificial system was the greatest element. These vicarious and representative sacrifices had indeed a twofold meaning. They reminded the offerer that he deserved to die on account of his sins, and at the same time they foreshadowed that death which was to be undergone by the Redeemer in the fulness of time to deliver man from the consequences of sin. Their true meaning is thus vividly expressed by Eusebius: "Whilst men had no victim that was more excellent, more precious, and more worthy of God, animals were made the price and ransom of their souls. And their substituting these animals in their own room, bore indeed some affinity to their suffering themselves, in which sense all the ancient worshippers and friends of God made use of them. The Holy Spirit had taught them that there should one day come a Victim more venerable, more holy, more worthy of God. He had likewise instructed them how to point Him out to the world by types and shadows. And thus they became prophets, and were not ignorant of their having been chosen out to represent to mankind the things which God resolved to accomplish[m]."

In real truth the great central point of Divine revelation is the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the Cross. Around this, the whole of Revelation revolves. It is to this that all former sacrifices are to be referred, and in the light of this alone that they can be understood. There probably was, in those early ages, but a vague and imperfect knowledge of their typical mean-

[m] Eusebius, Demonst. Evang., lib. i. c. 10. "Sacrifices of expiation were commanded the Jews, and obtained amongst most other nations from tradition, whose original probably was Revelation."—*Butler's Analogy*, part ii. c. 5.

ing; but at any rate there was room for the exercise of faith, through such sacrifices, in the promise of salvation. And thus Abel's sacrifice was his parable of redemption, and in offering it he was justified sacramentally, and by faith. He had grasped the great truth of man's sinfulness and man's need of an atonement; and as he presented his lamb upon the altar he delivered a witness, the power of which no lapse of ages can weaken,—a witness to the efficacy of "that Blood which cleanseth from all sin." We thus see why Abel's offering was accepted, and why Cain's was rejected. Abel by his sacrifice proved his faith in the Divinely appointed method of salvation; whereas Cain, disdaining the Divine command, and perhaps considering the means unworthy of the end, deemed it sufficient to render his homage to God as the God of Providence. Cain sought to be accepted for his own righteousness; Abel sought acceptance through the righteousness and death of another. The question to be solved in that early period, the question which all along the ages demands an answer, was this, whether "Revelation ought to control Reason, or Reason to prescribe to Revelation[n]." Cain would accept no guide but Reason; Abel added Faith to Reason; and as the fire from heaven fell and consumed his sacrifice, there was a sensible evidence that he had found justification; and so from that primæval altar there went forth the undying message, even to the remotest depths of time, that "without shedding of blood is no remission," and that the Atoning Sacrifice upon the Cross is the only appointed means by which Death can be abolished and Sin done away.

Thus, also, this first martyr teaches us something of

[n] South.

the nature of that faith which justifies. It is not the mere assent of the understanding; it is not merely an act of the mind which follows necessarily wherever there is sufficient testimony. The faith which Abel had is not a natural gift; it is the gift of God. The great and principal object which is presented to the faith that justifies is Jesus Christ dying upon the Cross for the sins of the world. Faith contemplates this object; it accepts the truth that there is none other Name whereby we can be saved; and it inspires each faithful man with the desire of being found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but "the righteousness which is of God by faith." Here was just the difference between these two brothers. Cain rejected the primæval revelation, but Abel accepted it. Cain was self-confident, too philosophical for the Gospel, too independent for a Redeemer; Abel bowed down before the majesty of Revelation. Cain's thoughts would be these: "I do not see what I have to do with my father's sin. I am told that the guilt of it is transmitted to me; but I do not believe in this kind of hereditary taint; and as for any personal sin, I do not see that anything which I have done deserves the penalty of death. I am not without becoming thoughts of God. I acknowledge His Being, I own His power, I adore His goodness. I am ready to bring my thank-offering to Him who blesses the labour of my hands, and causes the earth to yield her increase[o]; but as for any prescribed mode of worshipping Him, I must myself be the judge of its propriety and reasonableness; and as for acknowledging myself a sinner deserving of death, or offering a sacrifice which indicates this, and which is supposed to have reference

[o] "Caini *oblatio*, confessionem duntaxat obligationis habuit, Abelis *victima*, confessionem peccati, et desiderium expiationis."—*Bengel.*

to some future atonement, against this my reason rebels." And so he brings his offering, which testifies indeed to a Creator's bounty, but conveys no recognition of a Saviour's love. Far different from this is the mind of Abel. "I acknowledge," he would say, "my father's guilt and my own. But blessed be His name that He has provided a remedy. I will go into His presence, and take a sacrifice which shall be a token of my faith in the Victim that He will one day provide, and in return for His amazing love I will consecrate myself, with the best that I have, to be henceforth wholly His[p]." Thus while Cain, through his unbelief and neglect of the Divine warning, became the founder of the race of evil men, so did Abel, by his faith and obedience, take the foremost place amongst the citizens of the heavenly City. And he was a type of Christ, not only in his meek and blameless life, and in the nature of his offering, but also in his death; for as he was sacrificed through the envy of his brother Cain, so was Christ Jesus crucified through the malice and envy of His brethren the Jewish people. And as the great Shepherd of the sheep was brought again from the dead, so shall this primitive shepherd, and all the saints and martyrs who have followed his faith, be brought again by a glorious resurrection, through the power of that "blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Well, then, might the Apostle say of Abel that "he, being dead, yet speaketh." Eloquent, indeed, are his utterances, and full of instruction, as their echoes ring from his early tomb, and are repeated from age to age along the mighty reach of six thousand years. They tell us of the first conflict of Reason with Revelation,

[p] See Meditationes Hebraicæ, *Rev. W. Tait.*

and of its inevitable issue. They tell us that our worship of God must be of faith as well as of reason. They tell us that if it be of faith, there will ever be mingled with it the acknowledgment of our sinfulness, and that therefore we must bring our sin-offering as well as our thank-offering to His footstool. And this we do by ever bearing in our hearts the remembrance of Christ dying for us, and by presenting Him by an act of faith as our trespass-offering to the Father. This we do especially in the Holy Communion, in which it should be our prayer that "the commemoration of the true Sacrifice may be well pleasing to God the Father, even as the gifts of Abel were accepted by Him[9]."

Then, further; as we place ourselves in thought by the grave of this early victim of violence and death, he speaks to us by his name. He tells us that "man is like to vanity, and that his time passeth away like a shadow." He tells us that we must expect to suffer for righteousness' sake; but he tells us also that this earthly life is not the highest boon. Eternity is our real lifetime, and death is but its birth. Who would exchange the brief life of Abel, taken quickly though violently to his everlasting reward, for the protracted and miserable existence of the murderer and fugitive, Cain? Not, indeed, that long life on earth is not to be desired. I know that out of life are the issues of eternity. Long life is therefore a blessing, if it be devoted to God; but if it is consumed in vanity or in sin, then I say, come early death, rather than an existence, the remembrance of which will sting hereafter like an adder. I know that there is not one in this congregation to-night who will deny that he was born for a nobler purpose than that of living to himself, and

[9] Ivo Carnotensis, quoted by J. Mede, p. 377.

for the gratifying of his passions. Every one of you must be conscious that he was born for something higher than this. You have been created, redeemed, and regenerated, that you should live to God's honour, and fulfil the great purposes of your existence; and there is something noble and dignified in the thought that we are, all of us, servants of the great King, appointed to do His work. With such a view of life we may pronounce long life to be a blessing; for then there is not a duty we perform, not a word we speak, not a thought we think, which may not add to the sum of our happiness in the future glories of the everlasting kingdom.

But we must think not only of ourselves but of others. Let me then, lastly, urge it upon you to seek so to live, that when you come to die you may deserve the epitaph of Abel, "He, being dead, yet speaketh." It is a pure and noble ambition to aim at handing on our names and examples with honour; and this, God helping us, is within the reach of all. To live, so as to finish the work which He has given us to do; to live, so as to please Him and to be useful to our brethren; to regard time as a precious talent, not to be wasted in indolence and self-indulgence, still less to be sacrificed to criminal pursuits and sensual pleasures; to regard time, I say, as a trust, and therefore not to be killed as an enemy, but to be redeemed as a friend; to live, every day, so as to give a good account of every day; to be humble and self-denying, and earnest and true, and generous and pure; to search out our faults and to try, honestly and manfully, to overcome them; in one word, "to live by the faith of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us,"—the influence of such a life is undying. The seed thus sown shall become a tree, yielding fruit for those that shall come after, yea,

stretching out its branches into eternity itself. And by such a life you, after death, shall yet speak,—speak as with a thousand tongues[r],—testifying to ages yet to come, that, whatever scornful and unbelieving men may say, Christianity is after all a great power in the world; and that the only religion which has any real abiding hold upon the hearts of men is the religion of the CRUCIFIED ONE.

[r] "Abelis olim occisi fides, innocentia, martyrium, et memoria adhuc recens est et celebratur apud omnes fideles, eosque ad sui imitationem exhortatur melius quam si Abel mille linguis eos exhortaretur."—*Cornelius à Lapide, in loc.*

# SERMON IV.

## Noah.

HEBREWS xi. 7.

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

THE great servants of God, generally speaking, share in a common stock of thought, feelings, resolves, efforts, sacrifices, which lifts them, as a class, above the ordinary level of men, and makes them what they are. They live in the world, without being of it; they look beyond its narrow frontiers for their main interests and ruling motives; in some shape or other they give up what they see for what they do not see. They feel, and feel practically, that human life is at once blessed and awful; blessed in its opportunities, awful in its possibilities. They act as men who are in possession of the clue to its real meaning; they know and feel why they are here, and whither they are going. And thus, in communion with the Author and object of their existence, and in doing His will, so far as they know it, by themselves and among their fellow-creatures, they realize the true scope and dignity of their being, and they fertilize the lives of all around them. "Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law will he exercise himself day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters, that shall bring forth his fruit in due season. His leaf also shall not wither, and look, whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper[a]."

But each among the servants of God has some distinguishing characteristic over and above those which are common to them as a body. As in nature no two flowers, no two animals, no two human countenances are exactly alike, so in grace this reflection among the creatures of the Creator's exhaustless resources is even more apparent. Each who has a part, still more, each who is eminent in the kingdom of grace, has in it a place, a form, a work, which belongs to no other; his character or his circumstances make him, at least in some respects, unlike any who have preceded or who follow him.

The great patriarchal figures who move before us in the sacred record of the antediluvian age are naturally shrouded in the dimness of a remote antiquity. Of the seven names which connect Seth with Noah, one only attracts a specific moral and religious interest: we pause at the holy life and the glorious translation of Enoch. With this exception there is little to arrest the attention beyond the length of years which was granted to those earliest generations of men. Strange, almost inconceivable, such longevity may perhaps appear when we contrast it with the existing limit of human life; but it is in harmony with the general scale of gigantic power to which all the most reliable evidence relating to the old world consistently points as characterizing it[b]. Life in that early age was com-

[a] Ps. i. 1—4. [b] Delitzsch.

paratively simple, regular, free from the social mischiefs and the weakness which came with a more highly organized society. The climate, the weather, the natural conditions under which man found himself were probably different from those which succeeded the Deluge. And Paradise was still recent, so that, although its great prerogatives had been immediately forfeited, the endowments of which man had been originally possessed, such as immortality, would die out only gradually, and as if by a process of progressive exhaustion[c]. Thus it was that when Enoch was translated into eternal life with God, without passing through disease and death, five generations of ancestors must still have been living, Jared, Mahalaleel, Cainan, Enos, even Seth; while Enoch's son Methuselah, and his grandson Lamech, had already attained an age far beyond that of modern man; Lamech was 113 years old. Of that antediluvian line, at the date in question, only Adam had been taken to his rest; only Noah was not yet born.

Sixty-nine years elapsed between the translation of Enoch and the birth of Noah, and during that period the moral atmosphere of human history had very rapidly darkened. This result appears to have been due to two main causes beyond the constantly self-aggravating effects of the Fall. In the fourth and fifth chapters of Genesis the developement of the human race is traced through two entirely different lines,—that of Cain and that of Seth. It would seem that, notwithstanding the sense of the phrase elsewhere in Scripture, the Sethites, and not any beings of a higher world, are in this connection meant by the august title, "sons of God;" and the intermarriage between the Sethites, who had preserved the higher and better traditions of Eden, and

[c] Delitzsch.

the Cainites, who had entirely lost them, issued in the rapid moral degradation of the posterity of Seth. Distinct from this, but contemporaneous with it, was the appearance of the Nephilim, the "giants" of the English Bible. They seem to have been social tyrants rather than physically unnatural monsters; they made the law of might the ruling force of that primitive society. The corruption of the old world was therefore mainly traceable to two factors, each fatal to the moral well-being of man;—it was due to social oppression, or cruelty, accompanied by a reckless sensuality.

Lamech felt the evils of his time; all seemed to him to flow, as it did flow, from the sin which had been perpetrated and from the curse which had been pronounced in Eden. He felt the burden of his labour upon the soil, and when his son was born, we read a proof of the father's melancholy together with the prophetic presentiment of a brighter future in the name of the infant: "And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed [d]."

Noah's personal piety is described by the same phrase as Enoch's: he "walked *with* God." This expression denotes even more than that which is used in a divine command to Abraham, and in Abraham's description of his own life [e]. Abraham was to "walk," and did "walk *before* God." Still more carefully should it be distinguished from "walking *after* God," a phrase by which Moses enjoins obedience to the law in one age, and Josiah renews it in another [f]. To walk after God is to lead a life of obedience to the commands given

[d] Gen. v. 20.

[e] Ibid. xvii. 1; xxiv. 40.

[f] Deut. xiii. 4; 2 Kings xxiii. 3; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31.

in the divine law; to walk before Him is to be constantly conscious of His overshadowing and searching Presence; but to walk with God is something higher and more blessed even than this; it is to be, as it were, constantly at His side, and in His confidence; it is to be admitted to close and intimate communion with Him as with a most cherished Friend; it is to be in spirit what the Apostles were in the flesh, when they shared, day by day, in the streets and lanes of Galilee, the Divine companionship of the Incarnate Son. Under the Gospel, it is St. John's "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ;" it is the equivalent to St. Paul's "being quickened and made sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Once only besides does the phrase occur in the Old Testament, when the Prophet Malachi applies it, not to the conduct of the Israelites generally, but to that of the priests, who stood in a closer relation to God than the rest of the people, and could enter the Holy of Holies, and hold intercourse with the Presence Which was veiled from the public eye[g].

Noah's piety, then, was of an exceptionally lofty kind. He is said expressly to "have been a just man, and perfect in his generations," and in the midst of the general corruption he "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Of this general temper, his thankfulness after his deliverance is a sample; in order to express it, he sacrifices some of the little store which he had saved from the general wreck; and a sentence in Ezekiel implies that he had especial power as an intercessor with God[h]. Yet his intercession is classed with that of Job and Daniel, and his thankfulness was in the form, as in the spirit of its manifestation, an anticipation, to

[g] Mal. ii. 3. [h] Ezek. xiv. 14, 20.

cite no other instances, of that of Moses. Holy Scripture, with its wonted simplicity and truthfulness, describes his fall, in his old age, into an error; whether of inadvertence or of weakness. It does not generally place him above the level of other servants of God. We have, then, still to ask what it was wherein Noah's specific and typical excellence more particularly shewed itself? And this question is answered by the passage we are considering in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Omitting all else—and there is much—which the history of this great Patriarch suggests, it bids us observe that "by faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

Indeed, it is to this period of the life of Noah that all the allusions to him in the New Testament, with the exception of that in St. Luke's genealogy of our Lord, refer. In the mind not only of St. Peter but of our Lord himself, "the days of Noah" were especially that most critical period of 120 years which preceded the Deluge[1]. It is possible that the social or political interest of his life may have been greater at earlier or at later periods; it is certain that the intensity of its moral interest centred in this.

In Noah's building the ark at the command of God there are three main points to be considered.

1. It implies, first of all, that he had an earnest conviction of the sanctity and greatness of moral truth; a conviction which, beyond any other, is the basis of the religious character. He was surrounded by populations which had broken altogether with the laws of God; impiety, impurity, lawlessness were the order of the day.

[1] St. Luke xvii. 26.

"Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually;" the corruption was universal, internal, profound. To a great many men a surrounding atmosphere of moral evil would be destructive of the moral sight. Those of us who know anything of our own hearts must know this; how easily we get accustomed to the sight of what is wrong, how soon we feel complacency, or something like complacency, towards it; how it undermines our sense of its malignity, and makes us, if not its captives, yet almost its tolerant apologists. "Neither doth he abhor everything that is evil," is a severe and exceptional condemnation in the mouth of the Psalmist. But how widely is it applicable! It is not that evil, triumphant as in Babylon, crushes us into acquiescence: the remnant of the Canaanites that is in the land suffices for the corruption of Israel. There it is; and we take it for granted, in ourselves and in others. It is part of the actual sum of human life and activity, nay, it is a very large part. Within our own hearts, perhaps, it finds something like countenance and sympathy. What is the good, we say to ourselves, of always finding fault with the weather or with an epidemic? We may wish that things were otherwise, but we resign ourselves philosophically to take them as they are.

This acquiescence in evil as inevitable, involves something beyond it. It leads us to shut our eyes to what the deepest and truest of all human presentiments—apart from the revelation of God—points to as its certain consequence. It blinds us to the fact that evil is, must be, followed, at some time or other, in some way or other, by punishment. Could it be otherwise, God would not be God,—a necessarily and intrinsically Moral Being; could it be otherwise, the first and most earnest

affirmation of a healthy conscience would be untrustworthy. And yet we may, by familiarity—tolerant, indolent, sympathetic familiarity—with evil, learn first to forget that evil leads to punishment, and next, not improbably, to deny it. It is inconceivable, we say, that a world-embracing mass of evil should be punished; its very universality is its safeguard and protection: it might be punished, if it were an exception; it must escape, simply as being the rule. This is what we tacitly say to ourselves: we shut our eyes to a first truth of morals, and we flatter ourselves that we are only recognising facts.

It was against this silent and fatal influence of a corrupt moral and social atmosphere that Noah's life was a protest and a resistance. Scripture says, he was "perfect in or among his generations," and those generations were altogether corrupt. He was a preacher of righteousness, when righteousness was at a discount and unpopular. He walked with God, when mankind at large had forgotten Him. He did not think the better of sin, of its real nature or of its future prospects, only because it was practised on a large scale, and with considerable apparent impunity. To Noah the eternal truths were more certain than the surface-appearances of life; he was certain that evil was evil, and that it could not but be followed by chastisement, because God is God.

2. Such a moral conviction, it must have been, which fitted Noah to listen to the Divine prediction of a coming deluge. God does not take the morally deaf and blind into His confidence. The words of Jesus Christ sound through all the ages of human history as the voice of a Divine Providence: "He that hath ears to ear, let him hear." He whose moral senses are alive, let him

listen to the proclamation of God's Truth; to others it will only be meaningless. "He that willeth to do the will of God shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Noah was "warned" of God "of things not seen as yet:" he was the subject in some way—we cannot determine in what way—of a supernatural communication. It may have been some sensible voice from without; it may have been an unmistakeably Divine assertion, yet from within. "God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them: and behold I will destroy them from the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood. . . . Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven: and everything that is in the earth shall die. . . . But with thee will I establish my Covenant[k]."

Why should Noah believe this prediction sufficiently to act upon that command? Because God had spoken. That was his reason; that was his conviction. It was enough for him, he needed no more. But his conviction of the unchangeableness and truth of the moral laws of God would have rendered such an announcement, under the circumstances, to him at least *morally* intelligible. It mattered not that what was foretold was altogether unratified by any past experience. In the burning plains of Central Asia, the idea of an universal Deluge may well have seemed the wildest of imaginations; a thousand years, at least, of human history had already passed, and there had been nothing like it. Nature seemed to be unvarying in her movements: the sun rose and set, the seasons succeeded each other, the generations of living beings appeared and passed

[k] Gen. vi. 14—18.

away: there was a limited, and so to call it, a regulated variety, traversing this reign of a discernible and pervading order; but as yet there was nothing that met the senses to warrant the expectation of a vast and overwhelming shock or catastrophe. Why should it be otherwise hereafter? Why should this accumulated experience go for nothing? why should the sense of security which it so amply warranted be succeeded by apprehensions of a disaster to which, as yet, the annals of the world afforded no parallel?

The answer was, because God had spoken. Who that believes in a really living God can plead the observed invariability of nature against the declared Will of the Author of nature? After all, this invariability, so to call it, appeals rather to the imagination than to the reason. The imagination becomes so accustomed to it, so moulded by it, that it undergoes a certain distress at the thought of its violent interruption; but reason, true reason, is ever mindful of the limits which bound even her widest observations. Because we observe a continuing sequence of similar effects, it does not follow as a certainty, it is only a high presumption, strong in proportion to the range of our observation, that these effects will continue indefinitely. We are not really in possession of knowledge respecting any secret necessity rooted in the nature of things, which makes it certain that they must continue; and if we believe that the Mighty Author of nature is really alive, and that He is a moral Being, and not merely a Force, or an Intelligence; and that as a Moral Being He may have grave reasons for disturbing all this physical and social symmetry which encircles us, we shall not distrust Him if He tells us that He means to do so. So it was with Noah: he was moved with fear, with a rea-

sonable and a religious fear. He did not treat the warning he had received as if it had been only an omen, appealing to his superstition: he "prepared an ark to the saving of his house."

The event in which Noah believed before it came was appealed to in a later age by St. Peter, as furnishing a reason for believing in a still future and greater catastrophe. St. Peter is writing at the very close of his life, and already a sufficient time had elapsed since the Ascension of our Lord to allow for the formation of doubts respecting His Second Coming, doubts which were based upon the seeming unchangeableness of the world and of the laws of life. "Where is the promise of His Coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation[l]?" The Apostle reminds those who argued thus that time has no meaning for the Eternal God, and that to apply our notions of the difference between greater and less portions of it to His Majestic Providences is to forget that there is simply no such thing as succession in His unbegun, unending Life. "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day[m]." But if Christ's delay meant nothing but His long-suffering, the unchanging order of the world could not be urged as a reason for disbelief in the catastrophe of a future judgment, because the past history of the world already contained at least one eminent example of such a catastrophe. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished[n]." In other words, water

[l] 2 St. Peter iii. 4. [m] Ibid. v. 8. [n] Ibid. v. 5, 6.

had been the instrument by which the surface of the earth was moulded, and one of the constituent elements of its well-being and productiveness; yet at the creative word of God, from being a servant and a blessing, it became an overmastering force and scourge. What had been, might yet be; another element had yet a work to do in God's providence, and neither the lapse of years nor the regularity of the observed order of nature, were any real reasons for presuming that the final catastrophe would not come at last. "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men[o]."

Nay, it is very possible that, with a larger knowledge than that which we at present possess, we might be able to extend the argument by additional illustrations. Some years ago it was usual to refer solely to the period of the Deluge the animal remains which have been discovered in caverns or beneath the surface of the earth. But more recent science urges that they imply a higher antiquity, and are found under circumstances for which no universal flood would sufficiently account. It may be so. Is there anything in the text of the Bible which obliges us to narrow down to six thousand years, or in any way to stint the measure of the world's antiquity, short of admitting its absolute eternity? On the contrary, between the record of the original creative act and the subsequent description of a gradual process by which, through successive periods,—"days" they are called,—the world was brought into its present state, there is room for a measureless interval or series of intervals. And if this be so, who shall say that many of the animal—it may be some of the 'human'

[o] 2 Pet. iii. 7.

—remains which are now pointed to as hostile or at least embarrassing to the Faith of Christians, are, after all, proofs and relics of some bygone catastrophes, of which, previous to the creation of the present order of things, this globe has been the scene, and by which ages of probation accorded to moral beings who have preceded us men, were, by the sentence of the Great Judge, violently closed? It is true that we are here altogether in the region of pure hypothesis; but, I submit that there is at least nothing in revelation which necessarily contradicts it; while, if it be true, it yields support to the argument of the Apostle, and it justifies the generous faith of the Patriarch.

Not that Noah's faith had anything to do with such cosmical speculations. Religious men may be glad to harmonize their convictions with the advancing but shifting and often inconsistent conclusions of human knowledge. But the foundation of their faith is one and invariable. They believe that He who made the world can control it: and when His purpose is clear to them, they do not allow themselves to lose sight of it only because their imaginations are powerfully impressed by the spectacle of a settled and common order of phenomena or institutions. They are therefore independent of scientific arguments, without being indifferent to them; they walk by faith and not by sight. They are quite certain that, whatever difficulties may be urged against His declared Will at the moment, God will in the long run justify Himself to man, and will vindicate the wisdom of those who in a day of trial and darkness have taken Him at His Word.

3. For a third point to be observed in Noah is his perseverance under difficulties. His faith was a practical principle, and it upheld him in the face of serious discouragements.

(*a.*) To begin with, he might easily have said to himself that there could be no real necessity for his personally exerting himself; that the threatened disaster would scarcely touch one who was already 480 years of age; that it would be enough to warn his children of what was coming when he himself would probably have entered upon his rest. Why should he rouse himself in advanced life to so great an effort as that which was required of him, instead of leaving it to be undertaken by younger hands? The answer in his conscience was, that God had said, not to others but to him: "Build thou an ark of gopher wood."

(*β.*) Again, he might naturally have dwelt upon the great mechanical and constructive difficulties of the undertaking. It is not to be supposed that these were left to be discovered for the first time by modern criticism. How could such an ark be built, so as to secure at once space and safety? How could it be provisioned, lighted, warmed? How would the several animals be gathered so as to enter it? how would it be possible to preserve them under conditions of weather and temperature so unlike their own? And then when would the scourge have passed? and how would it be possible to enter again upon the earth as a solitary colonist, amid the traces of so gigantic a desolation? Well may Noah's heart have sunk within him. Yet, he knew, God had said to him, "Build thou an ark of gopher wood," and he had only to obey.

(*γ.*) Once more. Noah had to begin his work, and to continue it, not merely without active support and sympathy, but under the eye of a public opinion, not so much hostile as contemptuously cynical. What was this extraordinary outlay of labour and skill? what was its purpose and meaning? how was it other than the crotchet of a visionary and a fanatic? Did he really

think that his fancies would become true, and that the settled order of nature as well as the civilization and progress of human life were going to be buried beneath the flood which he dreamt of navigating? Was every one else wrong, while he was right? was his private information (if such it was) to be weighed against the collective experience and judgment of mankind? How they must have mocked at the entire undertaking! how naturally must they, in their aversion to the idea and object, have revenged themselves on the form and appearance! What airy criticisms must have been lavished on it in its earliest rudimentary shape, on each detail which was supplied to it, on its complete structure! what delicate and yet bitter comments on its uselessness, its ugliness, its utter opposition to the whole current of contemporary thought and feeling! How, too, some of the more liberal critics would have endeavoured, as if in scornful and condescending pity, to enter, although remotely and for a moment, into the strange hallucinations that could have produced it,—as if surveying from afar a mental curiosity, which only did not move their anger because it ministered so abundantly to their amusement! And then with what satisfaction and complacency would they have betaken themselves anew to the life against which it was a protest and a warning, as to that which was warranted by the common sense and judgment of the time, and by a force of custom and sentiment which, as the world grew older, was daily gathering new strength and empire. Our Lord has said that what took place then is an anticipation of what will be on the eve of the last Judgment: "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married and were given in marriage, until the day came

that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all [p]."

Yes, there was a delay of 120 years, but the threatened judgment came at last. "The flood came and destroyed them all." Whether it was strictly universal or something less than universal; whether it covered Ararat without covering, for instance, the Himalayas; whether it can be explained by any combination of known causes or only by supernatural ones;—these are important questions, but they do not touch the moral interest of the narrative, they would only lead us away from it. The judgment came. It came to vindicate the morality and sovereignty of God; it came to justify Noah, and to condemn the generation which rejected him. It came to demonstrate the folly and emptiness of all the glitter and order of that ancient civilization; the irreverence and falsehood of that opinion which seemed at the time so well founded and so strong. There must have been a day,—an hour of uttered surprise, alarm, struggle, agony, despair,—when this was realized. Poets and painters have endeavoured to pourtray it. But as the mind dwells on any vast picture of human agony, the heart grows sick and the head giddy. In that buried multitude, no doubt, there were degrees of responsibility and guilt, known to and weighed by the Eternal Justice. The Apostle hints as much in a significant expression [q], which apparently implies that on the descent of our Lord's Human Soul into the place of the departed there was a compensatory preaching at least to some of the imprisoned spirits of the antediluvian world. But, the general result is a contrast between an overwhelming judgment and a signal mercy,

[p] St. Luke xvii. 26, 27.

[q] 1 St. Pet. iii. 19, 20, compared with 1 St. Pet. iv. 6.

—a judgment provoked by forgetfulness of the law and knowledge of God, and a mercy awarded to faith in His word, which was not sacrificed to false and narrow views of duty, or to baseless misgivings, or to the corrupt and corrupting opinion of the day.

What Noah's work really and mainly foreshadowed would have been obscure at the time ; but we look back upon it from a vantage ground, which enables us to do it justice. Every Christian must see, in the labour and temporal salvation of Noah, the shadow of a greater Toil and a more complete Deliverance. Looking to Jesus Christ, humanity in its wretchedness and yet in its hope might use in a deeper sense the words of Lamech : "This Same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands." Like Noah, Jesus Christ was a preacher of Righteousness ; He preached a higher and broader Righteousness than man knew before, but then, by His Passion and Death and gifts of grace, He robed man in it, and made His Revelation tolerable to human weakness by making its substance a gift to faith[r]. And as Noah built an ark for the saving of his house, so did our Lord build His Church to be the home of His followers, with the promise that against it "the gates of Hell should not finally prevail." His teaching, His example, His works of mercy and of grace, His bitter Passion and Death, His Resurrection from the tomb and ascent to Heaven, were all steps in this mighty work ; the Divine Architect shed His very life-blood in the labour of construction. And at length Pentecost came, and the Eternal Spirit welded all into a consistent and enduring whole ; and as the races and sexes and degrees of men passed within it at the heavenly call, lo ! there was neither Greek nor Jew, neither

[r] Heb. xi. 1.

male nor female, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ was all and in all[s]. And although, since those earlier days, the passions and errors of men have raised walls of partition within the Divine Fabric over and above the 'stories' which He ordered to be made in it[t], yet these most assuredly will not always last; they are human, while the Ark itself is Divine. Even now it floats upon the waters, upon the vast ocean of human opinion and society, and we, without any merit of our own, but of His free grace and mercy, have been permitted to enter it. Over us was uttered the prayer that "the Everlasting God, Who of His Great Mercy did save Noah and His family in the Ark from perishing by water," would look upon, wash, and sanctify us; that being delivered from His wrath we might be "received into the Ark of Christ's Church, and being steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, might so pass through the waves of this troublesome world, that finally we might come to the land of Everlasting Life[u]." We may, of course, if we will, plunge again into the waters; but we have only ourselves to thank if the Ark of the true Noah does not land us at the last on the Mount of God.

It may be useful to insist upon one or two practical conclusions which are suggested to us by the life and work of Noah.

(a.) It suggests, first of all, a particular form of duty, which at certain times in the world's history may press very heavily on the conscience of public men whether in Church or State; and, at certain turns in life, upon all of us, however private and retired our place and work may be. I mean the duty which may arise upon

[s] Col. iii. 11; Gal. iii. 28. [t] Gen. vi. 16. [u] Baptismal Service.

our seeing, or believing that we see, more or less clearly into a future which has to be provided for, or provided against. Indeed, to endeavour to look forward and provide is a part of the work of those who are charged with the maintenance and support of large public interests. It is their business to observe the direction in which things are moving, the forces which are coming to the front, the combinations or separations of forces which may be fairly anticipated, the general result that will emerge from and succeed the state of things with which they are actually conversant. Here, as elsewhere, to seek knowledge is to learn, at any rate, something; and God teaches us through our natural powers of observation and reflection, as well as in other and higher ways. Here, as elsewhere, to pray to know enough to be able to do God's Will in our day and generation, is to be answered; and, it may be, to have to anticipate deliberately much to which we would willingly be blind. Such a habit of looking forward, if its motive be higher than a speculative curiosity, will not interfere with the duties of the present hour: nor will it militate against the general temper of trustful resignation, which, in those who see furthest and deepest, is ever ready to leave its hopes and fears in the Hands of God. In private and worldly concerns, such foresight is not often either undervalued or neglected. No man continues to invest his money in an undertaking recommended by an imposing Prospectus and Board of Directors, if beneath its fair promises and apparent prosperity he can clearly see at work the causes of coming bankruptcy. But where the interests of others are only or chiefly concerned, it being probable that the man himself will have passed from the scene before his anticipations are realized, it is possible for him to find himself in Noah's

position thus far;—that he guesses a danger, a catastrophe, which is hidden from the sight of his contemporaries, and which imposes on him the plain duty of preparing to meet it.

Then comes his trial. Will he bestir himself to obey the behests of his conviction, or will he indolently fold his hands and let things take their course? Will he say to himself, "After all, this is no particular concern of mine; it is the concern of everybody. Why should I be compelled to put myself out of my way in a matter that interests hundreds of other people as much as it interests me? Why should I be taxed, heavily taxed, on the score of my farsightedness, while others can go on easily and quietly, with a perfectly good conscience, only because they are too unobservant or too inert to see, or to try to see, beyond the next turn in the road? I will let things take their course; there is no necessity on my part for a chivalry which will be mocked at till it is justified by events, and which, even if events do justify it, will soon be forgotten."

Will he reason thus, or will he reflect that knowledge, insight, farsightedness, if they really exist and are felt to exist, constitute responsibility; that, even if he would, a man who sees further and knows more than others cannot be as others, morally, and before God or before men; that together with knowledge there comes, to a certain extent, and within the area which it covers, a forfeiture of that particular species of liberty which is a moral right of ignorance? Will he reason thus, and act upon his reasoning? My brethren, it is a critical question; possibly for the generation, the country, the Church to which he belongs, but certainly and under any circumstances for himself.

Can anyone with a heart think without sorrow of

that King of France whose reign covers the greater part of the last century, and who spans the interval which connects the Court of the Great Monarch with the reign of the Bourbon who died upon the scaffold? Few things in history are more piteous than the contrast between a boyhood of much interest and promise and an advanced life of abject, systematized dissipation. Yet Louis XV. was not wanting in penetration; and the gay revelries of Versailles did not wholly blind or deafen him to sights and sounds which might have convinced a less observant ruler that the fountains of the great deep of national life were breaking up, and that a new order of things was imminent. Allowing for the difficulties of a traditional position such as his, may we not believe that an earnest and well-considered effort to improve the condition and assert the rights of the people, in the middle of the century, might have saved France from the torrents of blood in which the inevitable Revolution was baptized? Yet Louis XV. passed away, enervated morally and physically by pleasures which ministered only to the satisfaction of the hour, while the mutterings of the approaching storm were falling on his dying ear, and his last and deepest convictions became embodied in words which were too surely verified: "After us the deluge."

Nor can we walk the streets of Oxford, and know anything of the history of the buildings which meet our eyes, without encountering another illustration of the matter before us. During the two centuries which preceded the Reformation there were men in England who felt that a change of some kind was coming, and that it was their duty to prepare for it. They could not read history with our eyes; they could not look into the future as we look back upon the past; they knew

not whether Reform or Revolution was before them. But at least, come what might, it could not but be well to gather and cultivate the highest learning of the time under the guidance and stimulus of Religion; and it was to this provident care of theirs that we owe the foundation of some of the noblest colleges in Oxford. It may be feared that the highest aim and desire of their great legacy will not be handed on to the generations that will follow us; and yet it may be the duty and privilege of our day, under other yet not altogether unlike circumstances, and on a humbler scale, to leave at least one modern institution in Oxford where human learning will still be blessed by Christ, when we of this century shall have gone to our account.

From the State and Education it is natural to pass to the Church. Nearly forty years have now elapsed since a few of the purest and loftiest spirits that ever breathed the air of this place saw in the suppression of some Irish Sees a warning to prepare for more serious emergencies. They, too, might have said, that as private clergymen and teachers they might well let things take their course, or leave the work of struggle and of protest to those who were set in the high places of the Church. But their insight into the future, such as it was, was their own; and they could not transfer to others the responsibility of possessing it. They knew that the real cause of present disaster, and the most serious menace of future danger, lay not in any exceptional irreligion on the part of the State, but in the fact that Churchmen were at best half-hearted in professing their Creed: Samson's locks had been shorn, and who could wonder that the Philistines were upon him. If the Church of England was to be loved and worked-for in the years to come, it must be by men who

recognized in her something nobler than the plaything and creature of Parliaments and Statesmen, something more than one of many human organizations, designed to promote co-operation among believers in Christ. If she was not a Branch of Christ's Body, her sacred language was a studied unreality; if her Sacraments were not channels of Divine Grace, were not their administrators like the heathen augurs of old, who could not but smile as they passed each other in the Forum? These men understood that a Church, to be upheld, must be believed in; but they would have failed, and deservedly, if they had endeavoured to re-invigorate a faith which they themselves held to be untrue. In their belief that, whatever came of it, they must go forward, in their simple sincerity, lay the secret of their strength. Out of the old materials which were ready to their hands, they set themselves to build an ark of fresh and strong convictions; they laboured, by all the avenues to public thought and feeling that they could command, to persuade their contemporaries to mean the Creed which daily passed their lips, and to act upon it.

It may be true that that movement has been pushed to some unwarranted and lamentable consequences, that its original principle has been, in some cases, caricatured or perverted, that it has indirectly created some bewilderment and confusion. What is this but to say that its originators and conductors were human, and that they have enjoyed no guaranteed exemption from human liability to error? But look at it generously and as a whole,—look at it as its opponents, I venture to say, will look at it, when in the clear daylight of history it can be viewed without any disturbing rays of intervening passion; and it will, it must be said to have saved the Church of England from impending death,

either by spiritual hysteria, or by spiritual atrophy. It has poured a tide of life,—the life of earnest conviction and of earnest work,—through all the arteries and veins of the Church of this land; and it is year by year adding to the spiritual force which alone can enable Christians to face the speculative or political anxieties of the future. He who exclaimed from Bagley, forty years ago,—

> "The flood is round thee, but thy towers as yet
> Are safe,"

at the sight of Oxford, foresaw clearly what was coming. And now that he is gone to his rest, it is not too much to say that he has done more perhaps than any in these last times to enable us of a younger generation to look forward to the rising flood, if not without fear on the score of our own possible disloyalty, yet certainly without misgiving as to the general and final issue to the Kingdom of Christ in England.

It is easy to exaggerate the importance of the age we live in; it is a subtle inclination of self-love which leads us to do so. Yet after allowing for this propensity or weakness, we can scarcely doubt that the present is a period of exceptional importance, whether to the State or to Religion, both in England and Europe. Scarcely a year passes without the crash of some old throne or constitution; and around us are taking place, silently but with astonishing rapidity, vast political and social changes, which cannot but lead to much besides in the years immediately to come. To be entering on the full powers of life in such days as these may be a privilege or a misery; as a man has or has not the heart to feel their moral solemnity. Alas! for those whose conduct at such a time exposes noble

names and ancient institutions to a condemnation, which will make it at least difficult to link the past with the future. Alas! for those who can see clearly and far into that which is hidden from most of us, yet who enjoy their keensightedness, if not with a reckless levity, yet without feeling any generous desire to lend a hand towards making an Ark of safety for truth and goodness. For, on a great scale or a small, there will be, there is, some share in the work of Noah to be taken by all of us; and they who work most in silence and unobserved, may have at the last the largest share in the blessing of the great Patriarch.

And, leaving public interests and duties, there is one sense in which each one of us must build his Ark, and that quickly. To every man death is the Deluge, and life is the time given him wherein to prepare to meet it. If we would not sink beneath the waters, we must build our Ark; and we have much less than the 120 years of Noah in which to build it. What if this brief and precious period is passing from us while we stand aside, watching the efforts of others, either in moody indifference, or in scornful contempt! What if,—as St. Augustine said of some Christians in his day, whose natural energy furthered Christ's kingdom, while their hearts were not enlisted in His cause—our part is only that of the mercenary Cainites, whose services the Patriarch enlisted to build the Ark, into which, when the day of trouble came, they would not enter! Let us look into this matter, if it be for the first time, this Lent. Let us lose no more days in setting to work, and let us take heed how we set to work. The ark of Salvation, says St. Augustine again, must be built by the Christian out of the wood of Christ's Cross. We cannot ourselves furnish either the design or the material; but if God

will not save us by ourselves, He certainly will not save us without ourselves, without our corresponding, that is to say, with His purposes of grace and mercy. Yet if He is with us, it matters little, although the clouds are sensibly darker than they were, and the fountains of the great deep are already breaking up. It matters little, though all be submerged before our eyes beneath the rising tide, if we know and are sure, upon the strength of His word, that after a brief voyage upon the waters, our feet will rest upon the Eternal Mountain, and we shall have our part in that mighty Thanksgiving which will never end.

# SERMON V.

## Eve.

GENESIS iii. 4, 5.

"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

EVE's temptation and fall is the forerunner and counterpart of the falls of the sons and daughters of Eve, especially of those who are relatively in her condition, innocence as yet not sharply tried, the relative innocence of youth, before its first great fall. Her central temptation was, to seek against the Will of God, in a way of her own, forbidden by God, a good which God willed to give her in His way. So much is this an image of us, that a school has been found, which teaches, that Eve's act was a stage in human progress, "the first bold venture of reason, the first beginning of moral being, the happiest event of human history[a];" "the eternal myth of man, whereby he becomes man[b];" "the free-willed human spirit, bursting through the bands of instinct and the narrow home of animal peace, to soar unhindered to the hot struggle for hallowing[c]." "The narrator would shew, how man

[a] Schiller üb. d. erste Menschengesellschaft nach d. leitfaden Mosaisch. Urkunde-Werke, x. 389, ed. 1838, in Delitzsch *ad loc.*

[b] Hegel, Philos. d. Gesch., p. 333, ib.

[c] Einhorn (a Rabbi) Princip. d. Mosaismus, i. 65, ib.

found his way, out of moral ignorance and unindependence, and attained to moral knowledge and self-dependence, but therewith took on himself greater duties, than he had before to fulfil[d]." As if a debasing slavery to evil were a necessary condition of the knowledge of the difference of good and evil; as if previous estrangement from God were the essential preparation for being His friend; as if a ghastly independence of the All-wise were the necessary pathway to matured wisdom; as if the subjugation of our spirits to the natures which we have in common with the beasts which perish, were the indispensable stepping-stone and threshold to "the glorious liberty of the sons of God;" and disobedience to our Creator were essential to the perfection of beings created in His "image and likeness;" as if lawlessness were true liberty, wandering amid error the condition of the attainment of truth, abuse of our God-given faculties the essential practice of their use, unreason the handmaid of reason, moral darkness the one only vestibule to the true Light, the Light in which God dwells, the Light which He Is. But for sin, the Incarnation might have been without the horribleness of the Passion; we might have been as God, yea, God-united, engodded; and God might have been as one of us, without our being first as the Evil One or as the brutes; Heaven might have been without hell; the eternal Halleluiahs without those everlasting cursings and blasphemies; the reign of Divine love without that dark realm of hate; the ever self-unfolding communication of the satisfying fulness which God has and is, without that eternal impotent rejection of God which would that He were not.

But God willed, for our endless well-being, to be

[d] Knobel, *ad loc.*

loved with our full free-will. He would not (even if it does not involve a contradiction) be loved without our free choice. He willed to condescend to expose Himself (so to speak) to the free choice or contempt of His creatures. He empowered them, by His grace, to choose Him; He even made it a violence to their engraced nature, not to choose Him. But He subjected Himself to the vile indignity that He Who Alone Is, Who hath and is all Good, the perpetual Fountain of all Perfection as of being, should be rejected by us, who have no being save from Him, who have from Himself the power of rejecting Him, rather than not bestow on us the unspeakable dignity, freely to choose Him.

And so, since that ever-to-be-repeated choice is of such infinite moment, God gives us the history, not of the moving temptation only and the fall, but of the order of Satan's wiles and Eve's tampering with her tempter.

Satan prepares for the fall by exaggerating the prohibition. He would convey hard thoughts of God, without directly touching on the prohibition itself. "Can it then be," he asks, "that the Deity[e] (he omits the special name of God) hath forbidden you to eat of any[f] tree of the garden?" Much as he might say now, "Has the Deity forbidden all progress? Has He put bars to the intelligence which He has created, and fettered the free scope and use of the reason which He has made a created image of His own?" Or, "Does God indeed mean to forbid us the enjoyment of the appetites which He has given us?" As though to re-

[e] אלהים. The special name, by which God revealed Himself to man, יהוה, is omitted in this dialogue.

[f] The force of לא תאכלו מכל.

strain a mighty stream within a prescribed channel, that it waste not itself, and change not the fair bright face of nature around it into a foul morass, were to dam its course! Satan would not directly impinge on the commandment itself, as now, too, he never begins at once with suggesting the overt breach of some chief commandment. He knows well, "No one at once becomes all bad[g]." But he would familiarize the mind or lodge in it the thought, "the Deity *could* be hard." It was the beginning of the fall, to hold intercourse with one who had such thoughts, and had suggested them. The idea, although set aside as a fact, was lodged in the soul, which held parlance with him who had suggested it. Not to reject the first insinuation of evil, is virtually to consent to it. Eve's answer agrees in two ways with our wont, when giving way. It seems most likely that she added of her own to God's command. For in this state of original righteousness, the command "not" to "eat of the fruit of the tree," and "not" to "touch it," would alike be positive commands. Neither was wrong in itself, except in so far as it violated a command of God. Nature was whole *then*. There was no temptation to contravene it. Allegiance to its Creator was its only trial. When God forbids *us* to do anything, for fear that the first step should lead to the next, it is that the first is easier to *us*, is a less wound to conscience than the other. So the thought or imagination of sin, such as is forbidden in the "thou shalt not covet," lies nearer to us than the full violation of the seventh or eighth commandment. But in the state of man's innocency, when nature was not yet disordered, there was no stronger temptation to eat, than to touch what was forbidden. There was no occasion to place a fence

[g] "Nemo repente fuit turpissimus."

round a further law, when to break either would have been the same offence, the breach of a positive law of God. Had God forbidden to touch the fruit, to touch it had been the same offence as to eat it. Either, alike, would have been to do what God forbade. Eve's answer, then, fair as the words sound, betrays that Satan's poison had begun to work in her soul. She made out, that God had forbidden more than He had; the very suggestion which Satan had just more broadly made to her. "Of the trees in the garden we may eat, and of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it and ye shall not touch it." Then follows the other token of giving way. She adds, "Lest ye die." Not the sin itself, not the loyalty to her God, not the ingratitude in disobeying Him Who had so bountifully endowed her and surrounded her with all things fair and beautiful, not the thought of that daily converse with God, and His being with them as a Friend, not the dread of the severance of that relation of love with Infinite love, which God is, is foremost in her mind, but the penal consequences to themselves of the breach of the commandment, "Lest ye die." True, God had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die." True also that the dread of hell is often, in our now fallen nature, the first beginning of a conversion to God. True also, that, as it involves an eternal severance from, and loss of God, the fear of it may rightly quicken the converted soul in its exceeding dread of that which is the true severance from God, sin. But in our unfallen nature it was already a leaning to a fall, that the penal consequences of sin were put forward, rather than the offence against God. It is not, "My God hath forbidden it, therefore I cannot do it, and sin against Him

Who made me and daily continueth these peaceful blessings to me;" but, "Ye shall not eat thereof, neither shall ye touch it, *lest ye die.*" She speaks of God as an austere Master, and forgets all His love.

Satan saw his advantage and seized it. Eve, thinking of the penalty to herself, not of her allegiance to her God, laid herself open to and invited the bold lie, "Ye shall assuredly not die." Nay, it was impossible that they should die. It was in contradiction with other certain truth, with the very name, which God Himself had given to the fruit, which He forbade, "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." "For the Deity doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as the Deity Himself, (i.e. thus far, in this point of knowing good and evil, which, Satan suggests, God had grudged His creature) "knowing good and evil." If, then, the knowledge of good and evil was to be the result of eating the fruit, then death could not anyhow be the immediate consequence of the act; else there would be no room or scope for those immediate effects, of which God spake by the very name. Yes, it could not be. There was a long future before them, a future, in which they should exchange their holy simplicity, or rather (as she would think) engraft upon it a knowledge, in its degree, like to that of God Himself Who forbade it, the knowledge of good and evil. But therewith he insinuated also that God withheld that knowledge, not in mercy but grudgingly. He Who made man in His likeness, willed not (Satan would have it) that he should be altogether like Him. He held back something, which would be good for His creature. Eve had lost sight of the thought of her allegiance and loving relation to God, in the thought of the penal consequences. The contradiction was plausible in itself so soon as it

was out of her mind, *Who* had said it. It had, as have most of Satan's lies, a mixture of truth, which gave colour and gained entrance to the lie, which it disguised. So far they were to become like to God, that they should "know good and evil." But how? By losing their Divine likeness to God, Who had made them "very good," and united them to Himself by His grace; knowing evil, not, as He does, objectively, as something wholly alien from Himself and excluding Himself, but by *becoming* evil. Just as now Satan offers freedom by breaking God's law, and substitutes real slavery, the gradual weakening and almost destruction of free-will, the slavery to evil habits, for the glorious liberty of one-mindedness with God. Then followed the typical course of sin. She looked, she considered, she weighed, but the one side only, the side of temptation. "She saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a desire to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, and she took of the fruit thereof and did eat." Holy Scripture probably veils the fiery consequences of that eating, and tells us only how Satan's promise was fulfilled. "Their eyes were opened, and" as the fruit of the tree of knowledge, "they knew" —what? "that they were naked." "They had become like God," but severed from Him. They knew good and evil. But instead of knowing evil afar, from the free height of good, they now know good only from the deep abyss of evil, wherein they had fallen. "Their eyes were opened." "Had they been blind before? They had been blind only to the mere sight of sense. They saw that they were naked and saw it not; for they saw themselves in God, saw all in Him, referred all to Him; nought of sense occupied their minds; in all they saw, they looked beyond to God; a mantle

was over all, and that mantle was the glory of God[h]." The flesh was fallen away from the might of the spirit; the spirit from the life in God. Broken was the band between the spirit and God; broken the band of the spirit and the flesh. This alone remained, that, having lost that robe of original righteousness, with which God created them, they felt shame; that, having sinned against their conscience, they did no violence to the conscience which testified against their sin.

God has retained in us such likeness to Himself, even amid our self-made unlikeness, such traces of His image even amid our defacing of it, such secret unintelligent longing for Himself, even while we are wandering far from Him among His creatures, that, if we will not seek Himself, we must seek some perverted likeness of Himself. The soul must willingly or unwillingly own its Creator. If she turn from Him, she must still seek, without Him, what she findeth not pure or untainted, till she return to Him. "In her very sins she seeks but a sort of likeness to God, in a proud and perverted, and therefore slavish, freedom[i]." She could not, at first at least, be deceived but by "a false and shadowy beauty[k]." Pride, ambition, false tenderness, curiosity, sloth, prodigality, covetousness, anger, alien as they are from God, what seek they but to be as God? So S. Augustine traces out the deep thought. "Pride doth imitate exaltedness, whereas Thou Alone art God, exalted over all. Ambition, what seeks it, but honours and glory? whereas Thou Alone art to be honoured above all, and glorious for evermore.—The tendernesses of the wanton would fain be counted love; yet is nothing more tender than Thy charity, nor is

[h] Delitzsch, *ad loc.*

[i] S. Aug. de Trin., xi. 8.

[k] Id. Conf., ii. n. 12.

ought loved more healthfully than *that*, Thy truth, bright and beautiful above all. Curiosity makes semblance of a desire of knowledge, whereas Thou supremely knowest all.—Yea, sloth would fain be at rest, but what stable rest besides the Lord? Luxury affects to be called plenty and abundance; but Thou art the Fulness and never-failing plenteousness of incorruptible pleasures. Prodigality presents a shadow of liberality; but Thou art the most overflowing Giver of all good. Covetousness would possess many things; and Thou possessest all things. Anger seeks revenge; who revenges more justly than Thou? Grief pines away for things lost, the delight of its desires, because it would have nothing taken away from it, as nothing can from Thee[1]."

Wonderful nobility and community with Himself, in which God created us! marvellous circumscription of our being by Him from Whom we evermore derive it, that even in sinning, rebelling against God, turning away from Him to His creatures, and turning them away from their rightful use, we yet cannot wholly emancipate ourselves from Him, we must seek some distorted likeness of Him, the more hideous, because it is distorted from so Infinite a Good.

But then look at the magnificent counterpart. Sin is an aweful, in itself an irremediable, mistake. It is to miss our real, our only, our everlasting Good, for which our God in His love created us. It is to have taken a fiery draught which burns through all our veins, for "the rivers of pleasure at His Right Hand." It is to have taken our enemy for our god, slavery for freedom, a flickering meteor, an exhalation dancing around morasses, for the true light; it is to have lost for

[1] Id. Ib., n. 13. The original is fuller.

eternity that, for which God in His Infinite love created us. But then, if we have chased the ever-retreating shadow, the substance is there; if we have mistaken the glass for the pearl, the counterfeit for the royal image, the lie for the truth, still the counterfeit is the pledge to us of the existence of the glorious original; the forgery, of the true God-stamped image; Satan's lie, of God's truth. God, Who made us for Himself, made nothing in us, for which He provided not the full contentment; and that, not hereafter only, but now. Long we for freedom? He will make us "free indeed," He will give us freedom, which they who have it know to be real. Long we for knowledge? He has spread wide open for us the boundless variety of His creation, but above all, He gives us a real knowledge of Himself, He opens to us His own being and the mysteries of His love, where our only darkness is from the excess of His light. Long we for love? *Here*, too, pure love has an intensity of joy, an image of heaven; so that it has been truly said in a measure, that "love is heaven and heaven is love;" and we scarcely turn from sin to God, but He sends a thrill of love into the soul, the faintest touch of which is above all creation. And beyond,

> "The heart that loveth knoweth well
> What Jesus 'tis to love."

In many things (would God I could think it was still in all, my sons) ye must be in that first stage, in which your temptation is to a forbidden fruit, as yet untasted. In whatever degree it has not been, ye know that the first stage is to think that there can be anything good besides or against the expressed mind or will of God; the next is to question, "Can God indeed have meant

to forbid this?" "Hath God indeed said?" Can God indeed have meant to lay such and such restrictions on His creature? To what end should He have placed the tree of knowledge in the midst of the garden, unless He meant us to eat thereof? The soul dares not at once openly rebel against the known will of God. If it *will* not be of the same mind with God, it must set itself to persuade itself that God is of the same mind with it. It is a necessity of our being, until we are lost, to be in harmony with Him Who is the end of our being, God. It is not all fear of punishment; still less, slavish fear. It is a holy dread to burst the band of union with God. Self-deceit is the soul's screen to hide from its eyes its severance from God. It dares not look its deed in the face, and do it. It snaps the bond of love, but looks away. The heathen persuaded themselves of old that the gods were the patrons of their sins. "Shall I not do, what the great Jove did? I did it gladly [m]." They consecrated their sins to their desecrating gods. The worst sins were, in nature-religions, the most consecrated. *They* said, "The gods meant this or that." In Christianity, men say more modestly, "Must not the God of nature have meant it?" After habituation to sin, the ἀκρατὴς becomes the ἀκόλαστος, and says boldly, "God did mean,"—what God in the most express terms forbade.

And so, as to faith. Hath God indeed said, that, on this very day Almighty God took our poor human flesh to be united co-eternally with His Godhead, and that, in the humility of the Virgin's womb? has God indeed said, that He Who, in our human time, was two days old, was Almighty God? or that God Himself, in our Flesh, was crucified? or has He indeed vouchsafed to

[m] Terence.

tell us how He Himself exists in His Co-eternal Love, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Or has God indeed said, that He has set Himself as our free choice, freely by His grace to choose Him, or freely, despising His grace, to reject Him, to be (oh, misery of miseries!) eternally miserable by eternally rejecting *Him*, Whom the soul knows to be the end and centre of its being? Indurated unbelief decrees peremptorily, "There is no god," or "human nature is god," or "we have no free-will or no immortality, but are like the beasts which perish." But unbelief ever begins, "Hath God indeed said?" meaning, We cannot or will not think that He hath said it; and quickly there follows that further thought, "He ought not to have said it, or so to have circumscribed the judgment of His creature."

Then follows, or is almost one with it, "Assuredly thou shalt not die." For God plainly cannot punish what He has not forbidden, or count it to be a rejection of His declared truth, to deny what His creatures have ruled for Him, that He cannot have meant to reveal. Only Almighty God and we are somehow to change places. We are to be His critics and judges, not He our Judge; we are to rule for Him, what He shall reveal to us. We are (which it comes to) to make our God, instead of having as our God, Him before Whom the Seraphim with their burning love veil their faces, from Whom the highest Intelligences are content ever to receive something of His exhaustless Fulness; Him, in whose tender love we reposed in our childhood; Who never failed us; Him Who made us; and to depend on Whom was our peace, and the full contentment of our joy.

Such were the forerunners of the fall. Then followed the, alas! so often-repeated history. "She saw," "she

took," "she ate," "she gave to eat." She had got rid of the fear of God. Why should He, how could He, punish so disproportionably an act so slight? She had seen His bountifulness; she had not seen its withdrawal. The seducing spirit who spake with her had disobeyed and had not died. All other fruits in the garden had been harmless: the fruit of the tree of life had, by God's appointment, some mysterious influence for good; why should not the fruit of the tree of knowledge? She had not *our* experience, to which everything speaks of the death of the body; the sun shone on no new-made graves then; no parent's loss foretold the death of the child. She would "rather believe that God could forgive the sin," that He could threaten what He would not fulfil, "than endure not to know, what this thing was, which He had forbidden," or *why* He had forbidden to eat thereof. Satan cannot persuade *us*, against our daily experience of human mortality, that we shall not die the death of the body. But it is the self-same argument, by which he prepares our falls; "Ye shall not die eternally." God threatens "the worm which shall never perish," "the inextinguishable fire." God is disbelieved, His creature's lie is believed.

Secure, then, from harm (as she thought), *she saw*. She looked what it could be. Alas, if one were to name in one word, the parent of sin, the ante-dater of all other temptation, the destroyer of purity of soul, the corrupter of the senses, the disputer with God the Holy Ghost for the possession of His temple, the soul,—earlier, mightier than all passion but *that* which gives it its food and nourishment, and strengthens its mastery, it is,—ye know, my sons, what I mean—(Oh, how Satan repeats his hellish triumph over Eve, when he has awakened it)—Curiosity. Victory were, by God's grace,

comparatively easy, were it not that the devil's porter[n], curiosity, opened the gates, and brought in those beasts of hell which lay waste the soul. They who have not, in boyhood, indulged curiosity are blessedly exempt from a whole embattled army of trials which it lets in on the poisoned soul. The baleful poison of the tree of knowledge has not spoiled the imagination, stirred up passions by nature happily asleep, created longings which belong not to its age, nor taken the will captive, when innocence would still start back from completed guilt.

> "Curiousness, first cause of all our ill,
> Is yet the plague which most torments us still."

Sins within the soul sometimes wound more gravely, are more perilous, can, in the nature of things, be more indefinitely multiplied than outward sins, though the outward sins of the same kind are seldom wanting. "Every man is tempted, being drawn forth and enticed by his own sin; then lust, having" by union with the will, "conceived, bringeth forth sin; but sin being perfected, bringeth forth death[o]."

Eve saw that the fruit had its threefold attractions. She had seen it before, but without the desire to eat; now she gazed outwardly at the lusciousness of its look, the invitingness of its beauty; and inwardly she saw all those tempting properties, of which the serpent had told her, the promised knowledge; and, gazing on these, she (as we have learned from her) forgot all besides. All other delights which God had spread so bountifully around her, the delights of every sense, when the senses, too, were pure, and everything of earth was transparent with the beauty of heaven; her innocent love for him,

[n] S. Thos. Aq. in Gen. [o] James i. 14.

from whose being her own was derived; her immediate relation to God her Creator; her intercourse with God as a Friend—all was forgotten in that long, curious, empassioned gaze. "Why gazest thou," says S. Bernard[p], "so intently on thy death? Why cast thither so often thy straying eyes? Why love to gaze on what thou mayest not eat? Sayest thou, 'I stretch my gaze, not my hand; to see is not forbidden me, only to eat.' Fault though it be not, it is fault's index. For whilst thou art intent on one thing, the serpent secretly glides into thy heart, speaks blandly to thee, holds thy reason by his blandishments, thy fear by his lies, saying, 'Thou shalt in no wise die.' He augments thy anxiety, while he stimulates appetite; he sharpens curiosity, while he suggests cupidity; at length he offers what was prohibited, and robs of what was allowed; he offers an apple, and steals away paradise; thou drinkest deep the poison, thyself to perish and to be the mother of the perishing!"

"She ate and she gave to her husband with her, and he did eat." O horrible aggravation of sin, with its almost impossibility of perishing alone. Eve was emancipated from the yoke of the prohibition which she had never felt until she rebelled against it; she was proud of her liberty, her progress, her independence; she was all in all in herself; she had eaten and she had not died; no remonstrance of God pleaded against her, no sentence of God had condemned her, the echoes of the "in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," had faded away. God's threatenings were not so real. Intoxicated with her impunity, with a whole wide future of successive triumphs before her, with proud hopes of her self-acquired likeness to God,

[p] De gradib. humilit., c. 10. n. 30, Opp. p. 578.

she sought to associate her husband in this her new career, the partner of that glorious course which she had opened to him. "He ate." The fall of humanity was completed; the robe of righteousness was gone; Adam had become her partner again, but in shame. Dreadful fascination of sin! It is a miracle of mercy if a sinner escape spreading the feverish infection of the leprosy of his sin.

Such is the oft-repeated history; such the sad wailing note of warning, floating down, but too often unheeded, from the closed gates of our lost paradise. "If thou wouldest avoid completed sin, flee from beginnings;" tamper not with it; let Christ's Cross, the seal on thy brow, fortify thee against imaginings; trust not thyself to rule for thyself, that God may not have meant what, as His Word is true, He has plainly said. Remember the closing words of God's revelation to man: "If any one shall take away from the sayings of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his portion from the book of life[q]."

Such was the fall. In the mystery of to-day[r] is the restoration. "In very truth," says S. Augustine[s], "we, too, confess it, that had the Lord willed in such wise to become man, as not to be born of a woman, this had been easy to His Majesty. For as He could be born of a woman without the man, so could He be born, not even through a woman (as was Adam). But this He did, that in neither sex His creature man might despair. If being man, as He was to be, He had not been born of a woman, women might despair of themselves, remembering their first sin, that the first man

[q] Rev. xxii. 19.

[r] March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation of the B. V. M.

[s] Serm. ad pop. 51, n. 3, Opp. v. 284.

was deceived through a woman, and they might think that they had no hope whatever in Christ. He came then as man, but born of a woman, as though saying to them, 'That ye may know that the creature of God is not evil, but sinful pleasure perverted it; lo, I am born as Man, lo, I am born of a Woman. I do not then condemn the creature which I made, but the sins which I made not. Let each sex behold its glory, let each confess its iniquity, and each hope for salvation.' The poisoned draught was given by a woman to man for his deceiving; let salvation be given to man to drink through a woman for his salvation. Let woman compensate for the sin that, by her, man was deceived, through conceiving Christ. Thence also women first announced to the Apostles the risen God. The woman announced death to her husband in Paradise; women, too, announced to men salvation in the Church. The Apostles were to announce to the nations the Resurrection of Christ; women announced it to the Apostles."

And not only so, but as our Blessed Lord overcame for us, in fact and in ensample, the threefold temptation of Adam, the eating the forbidden fruit in the "command these stones that they become bread:" the vainglory, "Ye shall be as God," in the "cast thyself down;" the covetousness, "Knowing good and evil," in "the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them;" so He vouchsafed to His Mother, at the vestibule of the Incarnation, to reverse the temptations and disobedience of Eve. The vainglory of Eve was reversed in the God-given humility of Mary, when she was willing, if such should be God's Will, to become the scorn of man; the disobedience of Eve by the obedience of Mary; the faithlessness of Eve by the faith of Mary. In the well-known words of the Father[1], "With a fit-

[1] S. Greg. Hom. 16. in Evang.

ness, Mary the Virgin is found obedient, saying, 'Behold Thy handmaid, O Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word;' but Eve was disobedient, for she obeyed not, while she was yet a Virgin. As she, becoming disobedient, became the cause of death both to herself and the whole human race, so also Mary, having the predestined Man, and being yet a Virgin, being obedient, became to herself and to the whole human race the cause of salvation. The knot of disobedience received the unloosing through the obedience of Mary; for what Eve, a virgin, bound by incredulity, that Mary, a virgin, unloosed by faith. Eve disbelieved through vainglory, longing to be as God, and lost her place in the creation; Mary, through humility, blindly believed God's Word by Gabriel, and was placed above all simply created beings, or all possible creations, in a nearness of love and glory which cannot be repeated in any other creation of God hereafter, cannot be imagined, as Theotokos, the Mother of God."

She was the Mother of our Redeemer, and so from her, as the fountain of His Human Birth, came all which He did, and was, and is to us. She, being the Mother of Him Who is our Life, became the Mother of Life; she was the Gate of Paradise, because she bore Him Who restored to us our lost Paradise; "the gate of Heaven," because He, born of her, "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers;" she was "the all-undefiled Mother of holiness," because "the Holy One born of her was called the Son of God;" "the light-clad Mother of Light," because He who indwelt her and was born of her, was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Such is the contrast, my sons, which this day suggests, of faith and faithlessness, of self-elation and humility, of receiving all things from God, or trying

to wring them from Him: of dependence on God, or a would-be independence of Him. Eve willed to receive from Satan what God for the time gave in measure only, and sunk our race in depths which we see around us, which we feel, alas! in ourselves, the bondage of this death, and, although saved, is a by-word. Mary willed blindly to receive whatever God should give, whatever He should appoint. And where is she? What has been, cannot cease to be. She who was the Mother of God-Man here, must be His Mother still. Little were it to be Queen of Angels. *The* special bliss must be the special love of the human Mother and the Divine Son.

Men tell you much of the grandeur of progress, the glory of independence, the bursting of trammels, the laying aside of antiquated notions, the being lords over yourselves. God grant that ye may be lords over yourselves, by being subject to the Infinite. God give you to burst every trammel which binds you. For His service is perfect freedom. God give you true progress, progress in God to the Infinite Wisdom in God. It is not the question what ye shall seek, but from whom ye shall seek it, from him from whom Eve sought it, who can give you but a lying semblance of the Gifts of God, or from Him Who alone hath true Knowledge, true Wisdom, true Light, true Riches, true Love.

Choose really, truly, fixedly to whom you will belong, whom you will be, whom ye will have, and may He direct and fix your choice, Who will be the everlasting Portion and Joy of those who choose Him.

# SERMON VI.

## Joshua.

HEBREWS xii. 2.

"Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith."

ALL the teaching of God's Church throughout the whole world points to Christ. He is the theme, all other persons and things are the preachers. He is the centre, upon Him all lines of light and evidence converge. He is the melody, which every harmony of psalmist or prophet accompanies and sustains. He is the reality, whose shadow (cast over the past and coming ages) makes the types and symbols of eternal truth; and teaches mortals in their softened light what eye hath not seen nor ear heard of the hidden things of God. From the day that man was made, the revelation of Christ began. In His image was he formed, the body that he bears was fashioned after the model of the first-born of every creature. From His lips in the garden in the cool of the day man learnt the first lessons of truth. From the tree that was Christ's symbol, by daily feeding on that sacrament of life, man's deathless being was renewed, and we can well believe that, had he remained faithful and unfallen to the end, Christ, as his companion and his friend, would have trained him on unto perfection; preparing for a crown without the sorrows of a cross; and translating to heaven

the being so sublimed and purified, without the need of passing through the shadow of the grave.

But sin came, and these dreams of bliss melted away before it; and from ruined man, but for the enduring love of Christ, all hope of heaven was gone. Life forfeited, innocence lost, the image of his Maker broken and defiled; no more walking with God in the garden, no more eagerness of conscious purity to meet the eternal eye, no more gathered food of life beneath that sacramental tree. Paradise lost, and peace, which is man's perpetual paradise, lost too. Stript of the seamless robe of innocence, which they had hitherto worn in their unconscious nakedness; and clothed in the skins of beasts that proclaimed that nakedness to all; the first parents of mankind went forth upon an accursed world to learn in labour and sorrow the lesson they had neglected in gladness; that one solemn lesson of truth, to learn which life is given, the lesson of obedience. To the paradise of their primal years they were to return no more. Sorer and heavier duties were henceforth to be essayed than the tilling and dressing of a weedless, thornless garden. Greater trials of faith than the passing by untouched one tree amid thousands rivalling it in fruitfulness and beauty. But when the discipline, which their passage through the world would bring, had done its bidding; when "the lust of the flesh" had been purged out in mortification and penitence, and prayer; and "the lust of the eye" in sorrow, and self-abasement, and self-sacrifice; and "the pride of life" amid the ruins of all human hope and joy:—then, again clothed in the raiment of light lost at the fall; and again conscious of an indwelling purity which would let them once more see their God; and again hungering and thirsting for righteousness, instead of

for the meat that perisheth; they shall enter in at the gate of the city, and eat again of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. And all the Church's teachings and trainings are to prepare for this. To seek out God's children in the midst of this naughty world, and wait by them, and watch over them, and cling to them, until they are saved for Christ; until His death has broken their hearts, and His life bound them up again; until patience has had its perfect work; until the old man with his deeds be put off, and the new man put on, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him; until Christ be all, and in all.

This has been, since the day in which the first promise of His coming was made, the mission of His Church; and here and there through the long dark ages that followed the fall, light after light rose on the world in the persons of God's holy people. Lights, which, like the morning stars, lighten with their borrowed beams the darkness of the sleeping nations, reflecting on the earth a glory which they receive direct, but which has not yet risen upon man.

The first Adam, the figure of Him who was to come, the shadow of the Second; Eve, the mother of all living, her type who was to be "the mother of Jesus," as well as her type also, who, as the Bride of Christ, was to rear "brother and sister and mother" for Him; Abel, the offerer of a better sacrifice, "who being dead yet speaketh," pointing "to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things" than his own could do; Noah, "who being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house;" the great type of Him in whom alone

is safety, when the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience; Melchizedek, "the king of peace, and priest of the most high God," who "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but, made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually," mysterious shadow of Him who, a high-priest for ever after that wondrous order, was to do for the faithful what for the father of the faithful was done of old, feed them under the symbols of bread and wine with His own most precious Body and Blood:—These, up to the time of Abraham, kept before the eyes of the believing amongst men the promise of salvation in Christ. They stood out from the felt darkness of the surrounding world. They uttered great truths, prolonging, each through a life, their utterance, that the echoes of what they taught might sound through all ages, go out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world, everywhere preaching Jesus; His humanity in Adam, His Church in Eve, His sacrifice in Abel, His redemption in Noah, His priesthood in Melchizedek; the new man, the child of God, the life and death of faith, safety in Jesus, and life in the communion that ever lives on Him:—these the great truths of the Gospel of Christ, which lives more than lips proclaimed; which, before the written word, were spoken out through man to man; and written with the finger of God on the fleshly tables of the heart.

But from the day in which Abraham was called, a more separate and clearly defined line was drawn round the Church of God. Called out of the world to be His witness, she must henceforth walk apart from its uncleanness, keeping herself unspotted, for the work her God had given her to do. She has a pro-

mise to hold, a written word to keep, a sacrifice to point to, a people to sanctify. To her the covenant is renewed, and the seal of Christ's suffering stamped upon it. Blood is shed upon the threshold over which each soul enters the Church of the living God. She is henceforth to be in the world, but not of the world, and to watch and wait for the coming of her Lord. She is to be made, in her future life, from its beginning to its close, a great lesson to man, a parable under which he may read all God's dealings with His people. She goes into bondage, that we may know the slavery of sin; and is brought out of it with a mighty hand and stretched-out arm, that we may know the blessing of salvation in Jesus. She is baptized in the sea, to figure to us thereby Holy Baptism; and in the pillar of cloud and fire she preaches the Presence of God.

In the wilderness, her wanderings and waywardness, her murmurings and rebellions, so often forgiven, and so often returned to again, teach us lessons of our own heart corruptions, which, looking so ungrateful as they do in others, may haply make us disgusted with ourselves, and turn our horror and our confusion in upon our own ungodly souls: and yet, through all those wanderings and waywardnesses, how wondrously were her children preserved. "They did all eat the same spiritual meat: they did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them; and that rock was Christ." And though with many of them God was not well-pleased, so that they were overthrown in the wilderness, still His covenant with His Church was unbroken and sure, and Israel was saved. The law had proclaimed its terrors and done its work; had lifted up its standard, but could not

lift the life of man to it; had shewn what was wrong, but had failed to lead to what was right; had terrified, but had not drawn. But what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, did for man. What Moses could not, Joshua did do. He became the Finisher of their faith, who, under his guidance, entered into the promised land. And that which He who is "the author as well as finisher of our faith," does in and by Himself for His Church, and every individual member of His communion, from the first to the last, from the font to the grave, Joshua, but a part of the great symbolic whole, did for that symbolic Church, which had so long worshipped in the wilderness. It took generations to tell out the one story, to perfect the one work of which Jesus is the author as well as finisher for men. Abraham, the father of the faithful, the giver of his only son: Isaac, the child of promise, the willing victim: Joseph, the betrayed and sold by his brethren, yet in the day of death the "Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe:" Moses, the deliverer, the lawgiver, the mediator, the comforter, the guide, the friend: Aaron, the high-priest, entered within the veil, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, tempted as we are: and lastly, Joshua, the saviour, the captain of Israel's salvation; not the author, but the finisher of the great work of faith which God had appointed them to do.

These all, each a part of the great whole which stretched over ages, wrought out, each in his appointed time and way, the salvation of God's Church on earth; and brought the children into the fulness of the promise made unto their fathers.

All helped toward their salvation, but to the last the

name of Saviour seemed more naturally to belong. Oshea, or Saviour as named from his birth; Jah Oshea, or the God-Saviour, as named anew by Moses, in the spirit of prophecy; every feature of his life and office typified the great Jah Oshea, or Jesus, the Saviour of the world. In bondage with his brethren, suffering with them, side by side, in all their wanderings and woes, bearing the yoke in his youth, the purest and most perfect of men recorded in Scripture. He who went to spy out and prepare a place for them, and came back to take them himself to that place: the bearer of grapes from Eshcol, whose wine they would one day drink new in their Father's kingdom. He to whom the law, as a schoolmaster, led; who did what it could not do; whose office on the banks of Jordan began, ere he entered into warfare for his people; who honoured not himself, but his great Master, whose work he had been commissioned to do; fulfilling to every tittle the whole law, and holding up that to men as their only rule and standard. He went down into the grave of the waters, and led up his people out of them with a glorious resurrection. His twelve memorial stones, his Apostles to generations unborn. The driver out of the enemies of the Lord, the saviour of publicans and harlots, the gentle heart-searching judge, the purifier of sin from his people, the divider of many mansions, the renewer of covenants forgotten, the bestower of the blessing of peace. There is not a phase or feature of his character which does not, as the light of revelation falls upon it, shew forth Jesus.

And it is from him, and his work amongst his people, that we are this evening to endeavour to learn a lesson of truth. We, who are many of us still in the wilderness, unable to enter into the promised land because of unbelief.

That promised land is not heaven above only, but heaven also below. It lies not all on the other side of Jordan, (if, indeed, Jordan mean that "Death's dark stream," of which the poet sings,) a portion of it is on this side of the cold river, a foretaste of the rest which is beyond. And into it we should all enter before this mortal puts on immortality. We should not be waiting for heaven till we die, but living in heaven while we live. "For we which have believed do enter into rest," that "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

But having once, by this portion of the metaphor, brought out this truth which I would desire earnestly to press upon all hearts, I purpose not to pursue the symbol too closely, knowing how hard it is to make any metaphor work out in all things accurate and true; and longing rather for the one great object I have set before me, to make Jordan mean those waters of penitence through which men must pass, who have lost in the wilderness of sin the purity of their baptismal covenant; the cleansing which the passage of the Red Sea brought them from Egypt's defilements; and who must, through the deep waters of tribulation, enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Then our thoughts would pass on naturally from repentance to progress in divine things, renewal of divine life, triumph over spiritual enemies, entering into rest and peace, and all that blessed consciousness of being saved—not *to be* saved,—which is the too often life-long unused privilege of the Christian.

To this, our Joshua, our Jesus, the great Captain of our salvation, alone can bring us. But if we range ourselves under His banner, He is pledged to bring us in safe. Yet not without some cost and toil and travail as borne by us.

Not without their implicit obedience did Joshua

bring in Israel. They had to "go forward" when the waters were at their highest, and believe, that the passage might be free. They had to cast away the filth of the flesh, and get back into covenant with God, as the first evidence of their repentance; and though their wounded bodies made them an easy prey to the sword of the enemy, they had to trust Him who can keep the body safe when the soul leans on Him. They had to gather in strength in the Holy Communion of the Passover, before they could dare to face their enemies, and to cherish their hope of what in Canaan God *would* do, by their memory of what in Egypt He *had* done. Before the walls of Jericho they had to be as unarmed, though they were all well armed, men; and shewing themselves as nothing, — a voice only crying in the wilderness,—thus to magnify the more His name and power, whose word laid those walls in the dust. They had to learn in the discomfiture of Ai, what secret sin does to paralyse the powers of the Christian; and in the awful death of the sinner, the perfect holiness of God. In the one altar reared at Shiloh for their common worship, they were to learn the unity of faith which was to bind them all to one God, in one sacred rite; and in the alarm raised by the other altar, built through imprudent and too independent zeal, with honest purpose, but with great danger of sin, they were to learn that good intentions are not enough, when God's will may be consulted and known. In the share which those on this side Jordan took with those on that side, in the conquest of the land, they were to learn and to teach the link of love which binds together the one family in heaven and earth in one great community of interest; how they who have crossed the river still need the sympathy of those who wait on this side, and

how our spiritual warfare on earth hastens the time when the souls that under the altar now cry "How long, O Lord, faithful and true?"—shall pass into the blessedness of heaven. And lastly, in that solemn renewal of their covenant with God under the oak of Shechem, where to Abraham of old the promise of the land had been renewed, and by Jacob on his return from exile, the strange gods and idol snares which had clung to some of his family, were buried out of sight; they taught the Church of Christ in all ages, that a covenant has two parts, duties to perform, as well as privileges to enjoy, and if the peace would be kept which God has given, it must be kept by His people's obedience.

These are our lessons to learn; God teach them to us in truthfulness and love.

So, then, turning altogether in upon our own hearts, and thinking only of our own spiritual condition, let us, by the light which the past has let into our souls, judge ourselves.

Where are we? in the wilderness, unmindful of our vows? looking back on the flesh-pots of Egypt? aimless, and restless, and unsatisfied, tossing to and fro in a hopeless purposeless life?

Or are we—turning to our Jah Oshea, our Jesus, and lifting up our eyes unto the hills whence cometh our help—preparing with earnest heart and full purpose of love to follow Him? To follow wherever He may lead? Through deep waters, if need be,—through pain and suffering and self-denial,—through whatever He may appoint as the fire which is to purify, as the water which is to cleanse? Or have those deep waters of penitence been past already through,—during this now nearly ended Lenten season? and have we risen up out

of them on the other side, our feet standing on the very borders of the land of peace?

Or have we gone on unto perfection, putting down Satan under our feet, subduing our enemies under us? the passion of our penitence past, the high walls of our pride level in the dust, the accursed thing wholly put away, no peril to the Lord's host through our hidden disobedience? but the land of promise our own, with its richness, its abundance, its beauty? its corn and vintage, its milk and honey, its upper and its nether springs, its altar in Shiloh our rest? its peace in *the Shiloh* our God? "Knowing in all our hearts and in all our souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord our God spake concerning us; all are come to pass unto us, not one thing hath failed thereof."

Is this indeed our portion? or do men when they hear it spoken of, look up in wonder, as if it were far beyond our reach on earth, and only to be found amid the everlasting hills of heaven? Do they dream of it as a possible future, when the hindrances of mortality are gone, when the Cherubim (their flaming swords quenched in the deep springs of eternal love—the blood of a crucified Redeemer,) drop them in the homage of a royal salute, to let the Redeemed, with their Redeemer, enter into the gates of a paradise closed against them so long?

Then, and then only, do they imagine that the peace, the perfect peace, in which he is kept whose mind is stayed on his God, the peace which passeth all understanding, of which they had heard so often, but never yet had felt it, do they imagine that this is to be found only in heaven, and is no necessary part of the heritage of Christ's people upon earth?

Alas! alas! what dishonour we do to the love, and the truth, and the power, and the glory of our covenant God!

Hath He not said? and can He not do it? Hath He not promised? and will He not make it good?

Where is your faith? the faith that could remove mountains as well as lay low walls? that could fill up seas, as easily as dry up rivers? Where is that substance of things hoped for, on which here we may lean, that evidence of things not seen, on which, more than our senses, we should rely? Where is that rest in Jesus, in which we are saved? that calm, quiet confidence which is our strength? that sweet perpetual song of heavenly devotion,—"My beloved is mine and I am His: He feedeth among the lilies,"—which cheers the heart and makes glad sunshine in the soul, "until the day break, and the shadows flee away?" Where are all these gracious evidences of the life of Christ within? If we want them, it is not through His fault, He is not less able to be a captain of salvation to us, than He was to make Joshua a captain of salvation to His people of old.

The sensible things of earth are not the only real things—nay, they are not, truly speaking, real things at all. All that story of Joshua and Israel (though a perfectly true story of a true people who won a true land), is still nevertheless but the shadow of things a thousand-fold more true. The conqueror and his myriads are dead, the land they conquered is deserted, in the pages of history only we now find the traces of what was done. But the true land is rich, and fadeless, and beautiful as ever, and the true Conqueror, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," is by our side. We may enter in, and ever remain in the peaceable

possession of our inheritance, whose riches and whose verdure can never perish, for they are as enduring as the everlasting hills from whence they come.

O if unhappily it should still be that we know not as yet that we are saved in Jesus, let us rest not until we are found in Him; found in Him without spot and blameless. He is the Author, let us rest not until we know Him to be the *Finisher* of our faith. The Alpha! why not the Omega? The beginning! why not the end? The first! why not the last? The all in all! able to save to the uttermost all who come to God through Him.

"Look unto Him, then, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved." Look unto Him through those days of darkness whose shadow will be over us so soon. Look unto Him on that accursed tree on which He died, that it might be the tree of life for man. Look unto Him as rising from the grave He tramples death under His feet. Look unto Him as, ascended up on high, He asks for grace to guide, and promises to come again, and crown that grace with glory. Look unto Him, as standing at the doors of your hearts, and knocking, and asking you to open and let Him in that He may dwell for ever there. Look unto Him, as looking even now on you, as He once turned and looked upon Peter, that by the moving passion of His tender love He may melt the sinner into tears. Look unto Him, and be saved by that very look of love, and enter into the rest of the redeemed. "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God." "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." "Looking unto Jesus, the *Author* and *Finisher* of our faith."

Rest not contented with a religion of dreams and wishes, of sighs and longings, of sickly hopes and fears. Take not as your motto the melancholy experience of the poet, who though he may have drank deeply of the nether, had never tasted of the upper springs, or else he could not have left behind him this sad proof of his unsatisfied longings :—

"Man never is, but always to be blest."

"We which have believed *do* enter into rest." "My blessing *is* upon My people." "Thou *hast* given him his heart's desire, and *hast* not withholden the request of his lips." "Thou prevent*est* him with the blessing of goodness." "Thou sett*est* a crown of pure gold upon his head."

Pass on into the present possession of these gifts of the Spirit. Pass on into the enjoyment of that good land and large, which the Lord hath given unto you; that land, in which *their* days shall be long, who in a life of obedience and duty claim the gift which waits on those who keep the first commandment with promise. For "he asked life of Thee and Thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever."

Lose not, through your own want of faith, one moment of that heaven below, much of which lies on this side Jordan; into which we may pass through the gate of life, long before the gate of death hath opened to receive us. Then when the end comes to the struggle and warfare of earth, and down into the valley of the shadow (but remember only the *shadow*) of death, we shall go; then the consciousness of the presence of peace will never pass away. And that awful change, through fear of which thousands upon thousands of God's redeemed and sanctified are all their lifetime subject to bondage, will be found to be only the open-

ing of a cage to let the prisoned bird go free, and pass up into that glorious privacy of light which veils the invisible God. The unfolding of a door, whose shadow is only on this side, and that for the simple reason that sunshine is for ever on the other. The closing of the eyes in sleep after a busy and toilsome day, to open them on the freshness of a morning whose sun shall no more go down. The passing into the peace of Paradise.

Unto which may God vouchsafe to bring us all in His infinite mercy.

# SERMON VII.

## Belief in a Living God essential to the True Life of Man.

PSALM xlii. 2.

"My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?"

BY whom this expression of passionate longing for the presence of God was first uttered, I will not now enquire. It was by the Holy Spirit that the words were taught, whether to David himself, or (as seems more probable) to ministers of the sanctuary in a later age. The forty-second and forty-third Psalms are the language of men who have lost what was dearer to them than anything in the world besides, and who cannot content themselves with new employments and another kind of life. Banished from home, they look back to their native hills; and as they look, their eyes are filled with tears. But chiefly they remember the glad solemnities which they kept in happier times, when they went to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holyday; and, as they remember these things, their souls are vexed, their hearts disquieted within. Yet there is hope: this disquiet must not be suffered to possess the servants of God. He will yet send out His light and His truth, and bring them to His holy hill: they will go to the

altar of God, the God of their joy and gladness, yet again.

Need I say that these Psalms have ministered to the longings of Christian hearts, too, in every age of the Church of Christ? Strangers in a foreign land, we long for our true home. We cannot be satisfied in our banishment. We do not see the God of our joy and gladness as we desire to see Him. He is present to us, indeed, sometimes, and for a while we have found delight in His presence. Then came a darker time; the sky was overcast with clouds: we prayed for light and truth that seemed wholly to have been lost. Even at the best, we have not that full communion with God, which we believe to be our true comfort and joy. We long to know Him better: we are tired of the world, and its heartless mockery, while they say daily unto us, "Where is now thy God?" He is about our path and about our bed, we could reply; but we want a deeper consciousness of His nearness. Hope soars above these poor experiences of ours: we will yet give him richer thanks, who is "the health of our countenance, and our God."

It may be said, indeed, that thoughts and feelings such as these are satisfied by material things. The look of the old church in which we worshipped long ago, the familiar chime of the bells we have heard in youthful days, the storied windows at which we have so often gazed with childish curiosity,—these things supply the comfort for which the exile longs. Give him these consolations, men say, and his craving will be set at rest. It is a mere sentiment, we are told, a fancy to be expressed by the poet's or the painter's art,—not a reasonable desire approved by the sober judgment of wise men, which thus thirsts and craves

after sacred scenes and holy things. So say this world's critics; and there is some truth, of course, in what they say. I do not deny that love of art, and refined taste, and fondness for antiquity, nay, that superstition herself, may breed a craving in the heart for the objects on which it has been taught to dwell. Some men are the slaves of these feelings and tastes, and men not always the worst or most foolish of their race. Among the less cultivated, again, we know how easy it is for strong affection to lay hold of the most trifling, or the most grotesque, of the circumstances connected with a sacred name. The æsthetics, as the phrase is, of religion do constitute some part of its influence, do sometimes thrust themselves into its place.

But why is it, we must still ask, that these tastes and feelings, these longings and affections, so persistently wear the garb of religion, so constantly speak its language and adopt its style? You know what answer to give. It is because there does exist, deeper than these fancies and accidental feelings, that which corresponds to a real craving of man's heart, which he cannot but acknowledge to himself as true, — which he tries in vain, if he is so unhappy as to try at all, to reason away. The poor orphan child, who has never known a father's love, has something in him which yearns after it, and would embrace it, if only he could be so blessed as to enjoy it. And shall the children of our Father in heaven have no capacity for loving Him? Is it conceivable that He created them to be ignorant of their Maker, with no inward witness to His existence, and to His claim upon them for filial love? Easier it were to think with the infidel that man had been the offspring of some blind fate, some unintelligible necessity, than to believe him to have

been the work of a Divine Creator, yet destitute of the power to love that Creator, and the wish to know Him in truth.

What shall we say, then? that, gifted with the power, burning with this desire, man may still be satisfied to live in ignorance of God? This, surely, is the strangest conceit of all. We are bidden to cherish what is called the religious sentiment: it is a valuable influence; it will elevate and refine those who yield to it; but it is to centre in itself. Our philosophical instructors, in their wisdom, desire to give us all the benefit of it; they are sensible of its advantages; they have observed that, without it, human society is apt to degenerate: for the mass of mankind, at all events, whatever they may say as to their own condition, religion of some sort is a necessity of life. Only it must never go beyond the domain of sentiment: they will not tolerate it when it appears in the character of faith. They bid us enjoy its consolations, and please ourselves with its hopes: we may have tender thoughts, pious meditations; the religious enthusiast may be pardoned if he should even relate his spiritual experiences, — if he should talk of heavenly raptures, or attribute some supernatural influence to his visionary dreams. More than this he must not do. If in the hour of trial he is conscious of a living Comforter, he must hold his peace. He may look up to heaven as steadfastly as he will; but if he see the glory of God there, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and if he repeat what he has seen, they will stop their ears, and run upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city where they dwell.

But we have a right to know why it is—if God be indeed that Lord of all, in whom we live, and move

and have our being—that we are to hold no conscious relations with Him. We can understand those who deny His existence altogether; however their denial may shock or distress us, we can see what it means. But to confess His power and goodness, nay, even to acknowledge His existence, and yet to separate ourselves from Him, is to act upon a principle which, in every other case, would be reckoned the greatest folly imaginable. If it were but some material force with which we had to deal, we should assuredly study its laws and manifestations: we should at least wish to have that familiarity with its operations which would enable us to avoid any evil consequences resulting from them, and to witness them without alarm. If it were a *moral* power,—some leader of thought and action, a hero or a saint,—we should watch every indication of character, try more and more to understand this lofty nature, superior indeed, yet brought within our own sphere of conduct: we should find something to imitate, something to admire; we should desire earnestly to have friendly relations with the object of our admiration, long ardently to approve ourselves in his eyes. To stand apart, refusing to look upon a noble life, busying ourselves with any trifling subject that could be employed to shut out the fair sight from our eyes,—this would be a wilful blindness which all men would condemn.

Is it, then, that we are unable to know God perfectly, and therefore that we must give up the attempt? Some such notion there is perhaps in the minds of those who set themselves in opposition nowadays to religious faith. The divisions among religious persons are so many and so grievous,—there is so little agreement even as to the fundamental articles of religion,—that it cannot be alto-

gether a matter of surprise if lookers-on are discouraged by an apparent want of unity, and therefore of success. They will wait, they say, until the professors of divine knowledge are united among themselves, before they devote their own energies to its pursuit. Without some prospect of certainty, they have no heart to enter upon the undertaking. These things are said sometimes in all honesty; they are not always mere excuses for unbelief. Unless I am much mistaken, there is no single cause which keeps back so many from the knowledge and love of God as the variances that exist—the disputes that wake such clamorous echoes—among those who are reputed to believe and love. Would to God that we could meet the objection with a simple denial of its truth! No plea in behalf of religion would be more cogent than an argument drawn from the loving agreement everywhere to be found among Christians, and the unclouded certainty of their common faith.

But do not let us exaggerate the objection. If the human soul be indeed "athirst for God," it is nothing to the purpose to say that the thirst has often failed to lead men to the living fountain, or even that, in the very attempt to quench it, they have fallen out by the way. How many times has thirst impelled the poor victim of it to seek relief from troubled waters, or even to take some dangerous draught, rather than continue to bear his pain. The thirst was a real thirst: somewhere there was a pure stream, at which it should have been quenched, and the existence of that stream is not the less to be believed because some sufferers doubted of it, and others, wandering in their search, fell down fainting on the bye-paths they had been persuaded to take. Nay, the very thirst, not slaked, as it ought to have been, with water from the pure spring, may have

weakened the man's capacity for the search; feverish, impatient excitement may have succeeded the calm, steadfast longing of health; he may be dying of thirst, yet unable to explain his need, incapable of judging what would give him true relief.

Brethren, in this matter we have much reason to take care that we do not deceive ourselves. Once we are satisfied that God has made us for Himself, and we have nothing more to do with objections. Are we prepared to deny, do we really doubt, that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him? Could we persuade ourselves for a single moment to believe that there is no existence beyond that which our bodily senses take note of? Or rather, are we not as sure of the existence of Almighty God as of our own? And would not life be intolerable if, by some strange disease in our minds, we could doubt or disbelieve its truth? Objections, then, are idle: it is too late to produce them; the cause is decided; whatever difficulties occur, we are sure that some way there must be by which they can be set at rest: if they are formidable, it is only because we have not yet viewed them aright.

It comes to this then, brethren,—that we find ourselves in the presence of God. We are not concerned with tastes or sentiments, but with a fact; we, living men, are in the presence of a living God. I ask you in all simplicity, must it not be a matter of infinite moment to us, whether we rightly perceive who this is in whose presence we stand? Must not our spiritual health, nay, our very life, depend on a right apprehension of Him, and a suitable behaviour towards Him? Let me answer in the solemn words of our Lord Himself: "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the true God,

and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." To be in the presence of God and not to know it,—rather, let me say, not to know *Him*,—this is spiritual death; for it is a wilful ignorance. Above us, around us, within us, are the evidences of His presence. His Spirit "beareth witness with our spirit" that we are His children. Our hearts tell us that there is nothing hidden from Him there. In a thousand ways we have been reminded of Him; it must have been our own fault if He is not in all our thoughts. You cannot stand in the blaze of the sun's noontide heat and be unconscious of it; you may, indeed, shroud yourself in some secret place from his light and warmth, but, in the full sunshine, it is only the dead corpse that feels no influence from the ray.

Do not suppose, brethren, that I am pleading with you as with unbelievers when I thus speak. You do not deny the reality of God's presence; you have not, perhaps, even the wish to forget it: but observe, that we are all under a temptation to forget, and that even a partial forgetfulness is inconsistent with true faith. It may have happened to any one of you to find himself in a vacant room, or to have rested on a journey in what seemed a solitary place. If you suddenly became aware that there was another beside yourself in the chamber, or that the place of your rest was not as solitary as you had supposed, did you notice how your whole feeling and manner and look underwent a change? It was not that you had been doing anything for which you desired concealment, not that you had any special concern, perhaps, with the stranger of whose presence you had become aware, but that the very consciousness of not being alone has a subtle influence which no one can resist. It may be sympathy, or reserve, or courtesy, or fear,—I am not concerned to analyse the feel-

ing; I do but recall a matter of ordinary human experience to help me to enforce the truth, that a vigorous spiritual life does not consist with even a partial forgetfulness of God.

But I am using altogether inadequate words. It is not a question of remembrance and forgetfulness; the text should have taught me better than thus to speak. The soul that lives truly to God is not content to *remember* Him; it is filled with a longing desire to enjoy His presence more and more. It is ashamed of having been so much occupied with lower thoughts. It is sensible of the meanness and vanity of this earthly life; it feels itself capable of higher things; it is vexed to be so burdened and kept down by common cares. Ever seeking to know Him better, it desires to go through life in His company, to view all things as He regards them, to choose and refuse, to love and abhor, as His guiding Spirit directs. "I am alway by Thee: for Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and after that receive me with glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee: and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

It is our desire, brethren in Christ, that these thoughts should, during this season of Lent, be brought home to your hearts. You do not deny, or wish to deny, that you are in God's presence every day. We wish you to meditate on the truth you have already confessed, to cultivate the affections that belong to it, to get your inward sight purged so as to see Him, in whom you believe, more clearly. It is in the Gospel that He will be revealed to you, not through the dull atmosphere of natural religion, but in the person of Christ, the Only-

begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth,—a revelation which comes home to simple souls not in power only, but in sweetness, and light, and joy. We wish you to consider well what this earthly life of yours is, how lately begun, how soon to pass away; and then to set over against it the life of Him "whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity." We wish you to take the true measure of your own feebleness, and then to look upon the majestic power of the Almighty, King of kings, and Lord of lords. We would have you to meditate on His essential holiness, that you may be the more ashamed of your own defilements, more moved to desire His cleansing grace. You are cowards in your spiritual life, afraid to speak out manfully of the faith that is in you, shrinking from a comrade's laughter, fearing the ordeal of a scornful jest; you will be bolder if you think on the calm, settled purposes of God, true to His promise, steadfast in His faithfulness to irresolute, vacillating man. You find it irksome to pray, a weariness to keep the ordered round of devotion, even with its long intermissions, its large concessions to your infirmity and want of zeal. You will pray better when you have reflected earnestly on God's loving readiness to listen to your prayer. You are ever deceiving yourselves with pretences of religion, with sham motives, specious pretexts, false excuses; have you considered that there is not a word in your tongue but He knoweth it altogether? You are wilful and perverse, throwing back with strange stubbornness the love that is ever seeking to win you to itself; we wish you to dwell, in the light of the Gospel, on the depth and fulness of that divine love. Above all, we desire you, at this time of penitence, to contemplate the untiring, unbounded mercy of God, so encouraging

in its offers, so beautiful in its condescension, so helpful to that personal work of repentance for sin which has to be done in every sinner's heart. And what, brethren, is to be the issue of these contemplations? Surely, as Easter draws near, you should be found in that closer communion with heavenly things which we call in the old Scripture language "walking after the Spirit," "walking by faith," "walking with God." You *cannot* think much of Him, and not wish to be much with Him. Your meditations on the poverty, and weakness, and meanness of your own condition must have been shallow indeed, if they have not made you more enamoured of the better, higher life, which is hid with Christ in God. But you will not be satisfied even then; nay, your walk with God, every step you take in it, will fill you with longings which in this world cannot be gratified to the full. Here all is imperfection, everything fragmentary, one-sided, incomplete; there only, in that future life, is the perfection which really meets the craving implanted in these souls of ours by Him who made them for Himself.

Dear brethren, I pray you be faithful to yourselves, to your better instincts, your true desires; for this is to be faithful to God from whom they come. He has not left you to yourselves. In the midst of this busy life of work, and duty, and pleasure; amidst these trials and honours, these friendships and rivalries, these sanguine hopes and passing fears, there *is* a Presence, calm steadfast, bright; a hand stretched over you to bless, a countenance so sweet that you cannot look on it and not be thankful to Him who has given you such high grace as to behold Him, though darkly, here; nor fail to pray that you may gaze upon Him in His beauty face to face.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Do not lose sight of Him now, that you may not fail to win, by His infinite mercy, that vision and that likeness in the resurrection day.

# SERMON VIII.

## Man's Weakness and God's Omnipotence.

2 CORINTHIANS xii. 9.

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

THE subject appointed for our meditation to-night is thus expressed: "Man's weakness and God's omnipotence."

I think, my brethren, we shall best sustain the intention of the course, if we try, by God's help, to pursue the train of thought herein suggested in no abstract way, but in the closest relation to our faith as Christians and our need as sinners. And the text offers the best guidance; best, not only because we believe it to be inspired, but because it leads directly to the reflection that the greatest and most important illustration of the bearing of God's omnipotence upon our weakness is to be found in that revelation which alone has ever satisfied the yearning of man's helplessness for One able and willing to save.

What is this holy voice to St. Paul but the Voice of the Deliverer to lost mankind? Is it not the everlasting Gospel in a single verse? "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." And so, can we wonder that no words are dearer to the heart of Christendom, none, probably, more consulted for practical use, as men resort to a trusted friend whose advice has never failed.

The confessedly difficult context is full of interest.

St. Paul has been replying to some ungenerous religious agitators, who, not content with inventing against him charges of vacillation and priestcraft, even went so far as to allege that his "bodily presence" was "weak" and his "speech contemptible"—"annihilated outright" —such is the full sense of the word.

The holy Apostle humbly yet firmly makes his own apology in answer to these taunts. He reviews his ministry, its singleness of aim, its freedom from a mercenary motive, its ever-widening sympathies.

But, in the present chapter, he appeals to higher evidences, to the actual proofs of God's favour vouchsafed to him in certain religious experiences he had enjoyed, first through "visions and revelations," secondly through distinct support under peculiar and heavy affliction.

It would be beyond our present purpose to attempt to explain the mysterious language[a] in which the Apostle records a glorious *rapture or spiritual ecstacy* as having happened to him fourteen years before the date of this Epistle. That he had been specially favoured, like Moses and Ezekiel, with certain entrancing approaches to the very court of heaven, that he had listened to ineffable sounds, had felt translated unaccountably into regions of glory and of praise,—this, at least, we gather with some distinctness from the passage beginning: "I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago."

But how little more we know! Was he living in

[a] τινὲς δέ φασι τὰ ῥήματα πράγματα εἶναι· ἑωρακέναι γὰρ αὐτὸν τοῦ παραδείσου τὸ κάλλος, καὶ τὰς ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῶν ἁγίων χορείας, καὶ τὴν παναρμόνιον τῆς ὑμνῳδίας φωνήν. Ἀλλὰ τούτων τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὸς οἶδεν ὁ ταῦτα τεθεαμένος. Ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐπὶ τὰ συνεχῆ τῆς ἑρμηνείας βαδίσωμεν.—Theodoret, a. l.

solitude, or at Antioch with St. Barnabas? Was it after his ordination to the apostleship, or was it a gleam of divine light sent to cheer the fast and brace the soul in anxious vigil before the laying on of hands?

What follows, however, is, if possible, even more remarkable, since it suddenly unveils the private religious difficulties of the saint in the very midst of these lofty spiritual privileges.

With a frank and manly simplicity, which is ever St. Paul's characteristic habit, he here relates how, "lest" he "should be exalted above measure," there was given him a "thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him."

It has been much debated what this acute trial may have been, whether some wearing and distracting pain, such as severe and prolonged headaches, according to the tradition of St. Jerome's day[b]; or whether some deep temptation of the spirit, some violent assault of passion, as teachers of the Middle Ages[c] have almost with one consent believed; or was it, as others in more recent times have (to their own satisfaction) proved, an affection of *eye-sight* illustrated by such expressions as, "Ye would have plucked out your *eyes* and given them to me[d]," and, "Ye see the size of the letters (?) in which I have written with my own hand[e];" or might it be, again, the sore trouble of false teachers piercing the holy Apostle through with many sorrows? Lastly, was

[b] St. Chrysostom, mentioning this idea, says, ἀλλὰ μὴ γένοιτο, and rejects the notion of any bodily ailment, believing the Apostle to refer to such adversaries as Alexander the Coppersmith.

[c] See Cornel. à Lap., Comment., a. l.

[d] Gal. iv. 15.

[e] Gal. vi. 11, πηλίκοις γράμμασιν; but cf. an interesting note appended to Dr. Lightfoot's dissertation on this subject, Ep. Gal., pp. 188-9, ed. 3, 1869.

it, as an eminent living divine and scholar prefers to think[f], some recurring epileptic or other similar seizure, incapacitating St. Paul from work for the time, rendering him, as it did our own Christian monarch Alfred the Great, altogether weak and powerless, cast down suddenly from his height of heroic energy to lie a suffering invalid under the chastening hand of God, until the attack should pass?

Certainly it is not an improper subject for reverent and cautious enquiry. Yet, brethren, how often in the sacred Scriptures where curiosity is baffled, the moral force of a passage remains unimpaired, its keen light undimmed, its practical usefulness entirely untouched by the circumstance of our ignorance!

Surely the master-truth here is *not* the *nature of the affliction*, but the contrast between the Apostle's infirmity and the infinite Power which could comfort him to the uttermost, and make his very weakness an occasion of spiritual advancement. Whatever the affliction was, its sharp agony, its prostrating weakness, its dispiriting effect on the mind, appear in the words which describe it[g]. Its victim is like a wrestler caught by an unseen arm from behind and hurled to the ground in the moment of expected victory.

A "messenger of Satan" interrupts and "buffets" him. He cries to God in prayer with the earnestness of a thrice-repeated supplication.

Oh that it might please the great Head of the Church to remove this all but intolerable hindrance to the daily work of the ministry! Oh that the same Saviour who had but now caught his soul in a divine rapture to para-

[f] Dr. Lightfoot, ibid.

[g] St. Chrysostom notes also the continuing distress, κολαφίζῃ, not κολαφίσῃ. See Bengel, a. l.

dise, and lifted him higher and higher to the very third heaven, would now pity his misery and mercifully remove it! But no such answer came; only a voice of far other meaning than that of release from suffering.

It is the Voice of Christ: for, be it observed, it appears from what follows to be Christ emphatically to whom St. Paul offers his prayer[h]; and so it is the Voice of Christ Jesus, that Voice from out the throne of the Ascended Humanity of the Eternal Son[i] which once before had called to Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus. *Then* our Lord had identified Himself with the Church in the persons of Saul's victims: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me?*" but *now* He identifies Himself with the Church in the person of that same Saul himself: the same, yet how different! And "He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Brethren, what a contrast is here! Is it not man's weakness met and corrected by the boundless and triumphant omnipotence of God? And this, not in the world of nature, but where we are more deeply, closely, personally, each of us, interested,—in the world of spirit, in life's battle, in the struggle of the mind to meet what most it dreads, most shrinks from, most longs for, power to face and to master.

We like to think of the majesty of God and the littleness of man in the world of nature. Even a thundercloud streaked for a moment with dazzling lightning, and the roar above us of heaven's artillery,—these, if they alarm with God's power, perhaps more often kindle

[h] Cf. Est. a. l., "Ostendit hic locus Christi fuisse verba dicentis: sufficit tibi," &c.

[i] "Ecce obiter alteram revelationem divo Paulo factam à Domino." Piconii Tripl. Expos.

thoughts of admiration and awe. But when we pass to the region of the soul, and there, amid her struggles with sin and sorrow, find the omnipotence of God in support, and comfort, and the gift of inward peace, a different sensation arises: do not we feel that this discovery of God's grace being sufficient for us is the one secret of life? Do not we feel that if we are learning, however slowly, yet surely, to know this *experience* of God's power confronting our feebleness in the secret court of conscience, then the Gospel of a suffering, sympathizing Saviour is not lost to us; we are within the folds of the saving net; we are of those to whom are still breathed from the unspeakable glory of the throne above the words of an all-powerful Friend: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

What, brethren, is our Lord's whole redeeming work but the omnipotence of God girding Himself with the garment of our weakness that He might succour the weak, and shew the strength of His love in this weakness?

The Shepherd leaving the ninety and nine to go after the *one lost world* is Monarch of the universe, yet a Shepherd; Almighty Lord of all lords, yet wayworn and suffering; the Light of the world, yet waiting at the heart's door as a lowly and homeless traveller! Mark how every part of His adorable life on earth illustrates this. The very weakness in which it pleased the Everlasting Son to veil His omnipotence presents the contrast at every step. Born in a manger, that same night He fills all heaven with the herald-songs of countless choirs of angels; growing up, as "a tender plant out of a dry ground," yet He answers another prophecy of the same inspired seer by being "the Mighty God,

the Father of an everlasting age," hidden behind the weakness of a retired boyhood and youth at Nazareth.

Again, consider the marvellous scene of the Temptation, to which our thoughts are led at the present season. What a picture is here of God's Almighty power enabling man's natural weakness to triumph over all the armies of hell! Our Lord stands alone in the wild, unbefriended, unsupported, unarmed, as regards any visible sources of strength. He is met by the impersonation of hell's utmost power. Every conceivable temptation is concentrated and implied in the threefold assault. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life,—appetite, covetous ambition, presumption, —what is not here included? What of the secret, what of the open assaults which had marred the life of millions for ages? Yet in vain: each poisoned shaft falls blunted from the invincible shield. It is omnipotence possessing man's weak frame in the person of the Incarnate Lord, and teaching us that, in Christ, at length our own human nature is gifted with the might of the Most High to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. *In Christ first*, afterwards in them that are Christ's, Christ fighting with them, Christ victorious in them,—His strength made perfect in their weakness.

We have pointed to the contrast between man's infirmity and God's ever-sufficient and boundless power. But *in Christ* we almost lose sight of the contrast in the intimate living connection. We no longer think of God's omnipotence apart from our weakness, for the one is evermore linked to the other in the heavenly chain of redeeming love.

We cannot reflect on God's infinite power without the image of Christ rising up before our thoughts, suspend-

ing at will the forces of the universe to prove His sympathy, to shew how He exerts that resistless sway to restore and comfort and save our else lost race. One moment He treads the waves of the deep lake, the next He lifts the sinking Apostle. Or He is meeting a funeral procession at Nain, and quickening to life the son of a widow. Or He is raising His own crucified and buried frame from death to life for the salvation of the world, rejoicing to reveal His perfect power in the weakness of suffering man.

Oh, my brethren! Oh, immortal yet suffering spirits! to whom I am permitted to speak to-night, what can go beyond the comfort—deep, satisfying comfort—of this revelation of the limitless power of God, whereon we may lean to the uttermost in every conceivable variety of trial, disappointment, and sorrow?

May we not, in view of this most supporting truth, apply the hymn-like words of St. Paul uttered on another occasion? "What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? .... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress?" .... And again: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me[k]."

This is surely the direct and practical influence of the text on the mind of a humble and true disciple. It leads at once to the thought of the impossibility of any sorrow or temptation which can ever befal you proving more than you can meet and bear, if only you

[k] Rom. viii. 31, 32, 35, and Philipp. iv. 13, *ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με*; compare this with St. Paul's use of *δύναμις* and *δυνατός*, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

lean upon the strength of Christ revealed by God's Spirit to the suffering heart.

What, then, says Christ's message to each of us but this: Do not be surprised if your trials increase, and even if the more you seem to learn the strength of God, the more you are crushed with the feeling of your own powerlessness. This is as it should be. It is thus that you are to experience the sufficiency of the power and love which made you, which died for you, which lives to sanctify you. It is thus: *not by the removal* of this or that perplexing, piercing[1] trouble, not by your release from the poverty which seems to interfere with your very religion and peace of mind, or from that bitter trial of temper which threatens to undo all Christian life and effort, or from the protracted delicacy, or recurring pain, or impending bereavement, or from anxiety about disturbing questions of opinion which agitate the Church and oppress your spirit,—not by the withdrawal of these will you learn the sufficiency of Almighty grace; but rather by their presence continually reminding you of your own weakness and need of support.

How true are the familiar lines of Edmund Waller, not of the effect of age only, but of the gradual upgrowth, as life goes on, of the knowledge of the real uses of trial:—

> "The soul's dark cottage, battered and decay'd,
> Lets in new light through chinks that Time hath made.
> *Stronger by weakness*, wiser men become
> As they draw nigh to their eternal home."

"Yes," says this Scripture of St. Paul to all patient and faithful hearts, "though you should be strained

[1] σκόλοψ, cf. LXX. Num. xxxiii. 55; Ez. xxviii. 24.

almost beyond endurance, though it be *the* trouble of all others you have always dreaded,—messenger of Satan, harassing, disheartening, perplexing, buffeting you,—yet know, O sufferer, that herein you are to feel God's power revealed to you as it never could have been without this infirmity."

Only meekly accept the trial, and it will bear this fruit "in due season" if you "faint not." Only endure the thorn, and wait,—it shall blossom as the rose.

To sum up, then, the one thought, the single precious lesson:—be our trial what it may, we are to take care lest in even wishing it altered we miss God's intended teaching for our particular case. We complain of our circumstances: we say, *This* is so trying, *that* so depressing: we wonder why, for example, *we* of all people should be marked out for this or that form of delicacy hindering us from active works of usefulness; or we fret because of some uncongenial influence in our home, and think, Ah! if it were different, *I* should be different. Or some temptation of desire, or, perchance, of intellectual doubt or restlessness about the controversies of the time,—these seem to mar our peace and make us restless and discontented; but, Oh Christian friends, if we can only recollect the watchword of the text, if we can but hide our poor wayward thoughts of self in the one deep conviction of the *sufficiency* of God, the one constant persuasion that He who tempers the "wind to the shorn lamb" will not suffer us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear, then, but not till then, shall we discover life's greatest secret. We shall learn that Christianity is not merely a noble sentiment about a Christlike purity, nor a mere system of belief, but a life to be led for a living Person, depending on Him, loyal to Him, evermore looking to His

glorified humanity as a fount of unfailing courage and patience for every sort of work and trial, if by any means we may master by lowly practice this one truth, that in Christ, by the Eternal Spirit, God's omnipotence is made perfect in our weakness.

Then, as we look out from this world of toil to the great future of futures before us, may we not hope that to us, as to one of old, will be breathed the message of assurance, "My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest?"

# SERMON IX.

## Man renewed in Christ, walking with God.

PSALM cxix. 57.

"Thou art my portion, O Lord."

THE subject upon which I am appointed to speak to you to-night is that of "Man renewed in Christ, walking with God." It comes as almost the closing subject of the long series of subjects, each growing out of each, which have been set before you during the Lent now closing. *To* this they have all led up; *through* this they lead up further to the concluding subject of all, viz. Man's future perfectness in the Presence of God. This circumstance defines the aspect in which I am called upon to treat of it. For look, man is not to live always in this world. He belongs to this world for time; he belongs to the next world for eternity. Here he is in the bud; there he will be in the flower and fruit. Here, at the best, he is incomplete; there he is to be made complete in whatever form of perfectness God intends for him. But, however different our condition in the other world will be, we shall be the same persons there as we are here. Yes, it will be you and I, our very selves, the self-same selves, on the other side of death and the resurrection, only that we shall be under different sets of circum-

stances, under different influences. Just as a tropical plant in our climate languishes, and when removed to its own climate flourishes again, but is the same plant still, though under different circumstances, so it will be with us. We shall be under different circumstances, and under new influences. So, then, the questions for us are these: What is there in that other world which is to make us perfect? and, How are we to live in this world so as to be capable of being made perfect when we come to the next?

It seems to me that men count with a strange and unreasoning confidence upon being perfectly good and holy in that future state. I suppose that there is no one in all this congregation who does not count upon it. Yet why? We know that we are not so here. Men confess that they are not what they ought to be. They say that they would like to be better, but they hardly try to be. They hear of a future world of holiness, and they put off *being* holy till they get there. They never ask themselves, What is there in that other world which is to make them complete in holiness? They never ask themselves if they are the kind of people who would be made holy by what they would find in heaven.

Suppose that God were to take us there this moment, without the trouble of dying, without the waiting for the resurrection, do you feel so very sure that what you would find there *would* render you complete and perfect?

And if not, what is to be our lot? For "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." And yet men put off the being holy until the world to come, as though *when they came there* they would be made so, as a matter of course, they know not how.

Brethren, there is that in the heaven of God which

*will* cause His saints to blossom into beauty inconceivable of divine holiness before His throne. There is that in the heavenly Jerusalem which will cause divine perfections to shine in and through the characters of the redeemed, as eye to eye they meet at last the Saviour whom they have seen by faith below; and in the closing sermon of this series, you will hear of what it is which shall transform the struggling sanctity of earth into the glorious perfection of the saints in bliss. It will be the actual, visible Presence of God, from out of which shall flow such strength of holiness as shall complete in every saint that which before was but struggling into bloom.

Not more surely does the returning sun of summer pour life into the struggling vegetation of winter, than the sun of God's immediate Presence shall then bring out to its completeness whatever form of half-developed sanctity the man has won his way to here. It will be the power of God's Presence that will do this. But upon whom will it have this effect? Will it have this effect upon every one? Transfer into the visible Presence of the Holy One that inhabiteth eternity a man whose every thought has been of selfish indulgence, what is there in him that should be drawn out into completed goodness? And yet men in general go on taking it for granted that they will be perfectly good in the next world, without considering whether they are the kind of people who *can* be made good by what they will find there.

Now the great work of this life is simply this, to bring us up to such a point, that when death and the resurrection are over, we may be the kind of characters to be drawn out into completed holiness by the Presence of God.

This is the work of life.

And it is just this which explains the whole outline of the Christian life, as set before us in the Church. For the whole idea of our life in the Church is based upon two main thoughts :—

(1.) That of the continual acquisition of at least a commencing holiness, commencing and ever growing here to be completed hereafter.

(2.) Of that holiness coming to us from actual contact and companionship with the Godhead now, even as it shall be completed by our closer union with the Godhead then.

Our whole spiritual life itself is but a germ from heaven planted *in* us here at baptism, which is to grow and grow until transplanted afterwards to its native heaven in the Presence of God. The *way* we grow in grace is by actual contact and companionship with Him who planted the germ of life within us ; a contact and companionship veiled now, because our mortal eyesight could not bear the vision of it, but which is nevertheless only the earthly counterpart of the unveiled vision which shall make our graces bloom into glory.

Common life is but a parable of grace. Would you make a youth grow like another who is better and more resolute than himself, stronger in character, and more confirmed in goodness? You let them dwell together, live together, walk together. If there is ever so little goodness in him, it is drawn out and fostered by the companionship of the one who has more, while the evil is checked and stunted for want of anything to bring it out. We have all felt this. There is none of us but can recall times of living with some one higher-minded and nobler than we were, and how the mere living with him lifted us above ourselves ; how if there were a difference between us, if we wished to do any-

thing he disapproved of, it did not need that he should say so. We felt it. Something passed from him into us which made us *feel*, without his saying anything, what he felt upon the matter, and we were checked.

Or if we agreed with him,—if we of our own selves wished what he wished, liked what he liked, did what he approved,—why we felt as if we caught goodness from him, as if we caught steadfastness from him, as if while he was by we could even feel our conscience growing keener, our soul growing purer, our love of holiness sinking deeper, so that we came to dread the very thought of parting, as though the fountain of our strength and goodness would be withdrawn.

*As if* we caught goodness, did I say? Why, brethren, you know that we *do* catch goodness in this way,—that this is just the way in which we *do* catch strength and steadfastness and knowledge and purity of heart, and that as deep answers unto deep, so in very earnest soul answers unto soul, and that there is a contagion of righteousness in the communion of saints. And what is this but a parable of the ever-flowing powers of life and goodness which overflow from Him unto and into the souls of those His members who walk with Him. It is no metaphor. He *is* our life. Into those who live in Him, who walk with Him, His powers for goodness pour as by a necessary law. The sap in a tree cannot stop flowing. Because the tree lives, the sap must flow. And so because Christ is our living Head, therefore His powers for goodness and for holiness must be ever overflowing into our spiritual life. And the secret reason why, if you live with good men, their goodness steals into your life as by a spiritual electricity, is that their goodness is caught from

Christ, nay, it is Christ in them; so that it is Christ Himself who from them is passing into you, to mould your character and stimulate your graces. The spiritual man is himself in his measure a sacrament of grace, a channel of divine virtue, communicating to others that grace which has been poured into him, and so drawing you at last to Him from whom his graces came.

Why have I dwelt so long on this? For several reasons.

I. Because, like a parable, it serves to illustrate what we mean when we say that it is only by actual walking with Christ, and contact with Christ, that any good whatever is ever nurtured in us. No faith of the mere speculative intellect ever reared a single saint. Simple living with Christ, dwelling in the light of His eye, walking, acting, with Him ever at our side, and striving to do all things as He would have done them, had He been in our place; this rears thousands into sanctity who never know that they are saints. By this the germ of our renewed life is fostered, its powers stimulated, its growth developed. By this our commencing holiness is kept increasing, so that it may be ready to burst into its completed bloom when we shall be transferred at last, risen and exalted, to the Presence of the Lord. As the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the counterpart of the adoration of the Lamb, so the walk with Christ on earth is the rehearsal of, and the preparation for, the life with God in heaven.

II. Second reason. Because in actual practice this is the actual way in which most men *are* led up to the walk with God on earth; and it is most important to notice God's providential order as a guide and suggestion for our own practice. Nothing is more important

than for the guide of souls to study God's ways and strive to follow out His perfect guidance. And so we note the fact that, practically, in a large majority of cases, Christ does not draw men to Him by His own immediate action. Sometimes He does. We all of us have seen cases of it; history tells of many; holy Scripture shews us more. Still, for every Saul converted by the overt action of the Lord Himself, there is many a Philip led by his brother Andrew. So the usual case is that He acts on us through His members, and through His Church. When first we walk with Him we are unconscious that it is He that we are walking with. Some good man's life, some saintly woman's companionship, has cast its spell of divine attraction over us. They draw us to them, we walk with them, we cannot help being drawn nearer and nearer, and the magic of spiritual forces influences and moulds us. At first, we scarcely see or know what power it is we yield to. At last our spiritual eyes begin to open, and we learn that there is in them a divine life working, which gives them their supernatural magnetic power over us, and then we are led *ourselves* to seek the same divine companionship which has made them what they are.

III. And, then, thirdly, if this be so, what a prodigious argument it is why, in all our arrangements respecting the life and culture of those whom we are set to teach and guide and govern, we should provide to the uttermost that they should be placed within the sphere of the supernatural influences which flow forth from the lively members of Christ's Body. What a value does this set upon the religious element in all places and systems of education. Not that the young themselves are at the moment conscious of it. Perhaps the less so the better. All vital processes go on almost

unconsciously. The moment you begin to feel them, there is something wrong. So we would train our youth amid men of spiritual mould, and daily services and frequent Eucharists, channels of His grace and Presence; that as their soul's eye opens upon life and responsibility, it may rest at once on Him who walketh amid the seven golden candlesticks, that they may then take Him for their guide in life, and walk with Him in preparation for the eternal Presence, which is the bliss of eternity. Aye, and not only so. For remember that this is not only the bliss of eternity, but that this is the very object for which God created man, and unto which He would have *all* men come. Heaven, and the joy of heaven, sanctity and the bliss of holiness, is not a thing apart, which God has devised for a chosen few as favoured darlings of His grace. Not so. The heights of heaven were *meant* for all, and they will be for all who will but seek them, even as His grace is freely offered to all who will walk with Him here. No soul here to-night but has been "renewed in Christ" by the power of the Holy Ghost. No soul here but may be walking through life with Christ his Lord, and catching heavenly tempers from that divine companionship each day that he "walks with God." No soul, therefore, but may in the dawn of the Resurrection, rise to the full fruition of the companionship which budded here, and in the long ages of eternity develope in limitless expansion the ever-growing sanctities which shall be fostered in those who shall be "for ever with the Lord." Amen.

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